

THE
FREE-AGENCY
OF

Accountable Creatures

Examined with CANDOUR,

And Defended,

In several LETTERS:

BEING

A full REPLY to the *most material* Objections, either from REASON or REVELATION, that have been urged against it, either by the Reverend Mr. *Bliss*, Mr. *Norman*, Mr. *Millar*, the *nameless Author*, the *Author* of the *Abstract*, or by Mr. *Eliot*.

With a PREFACE, containing a short View of the Occasion and Importance of the CONTROVERSY.

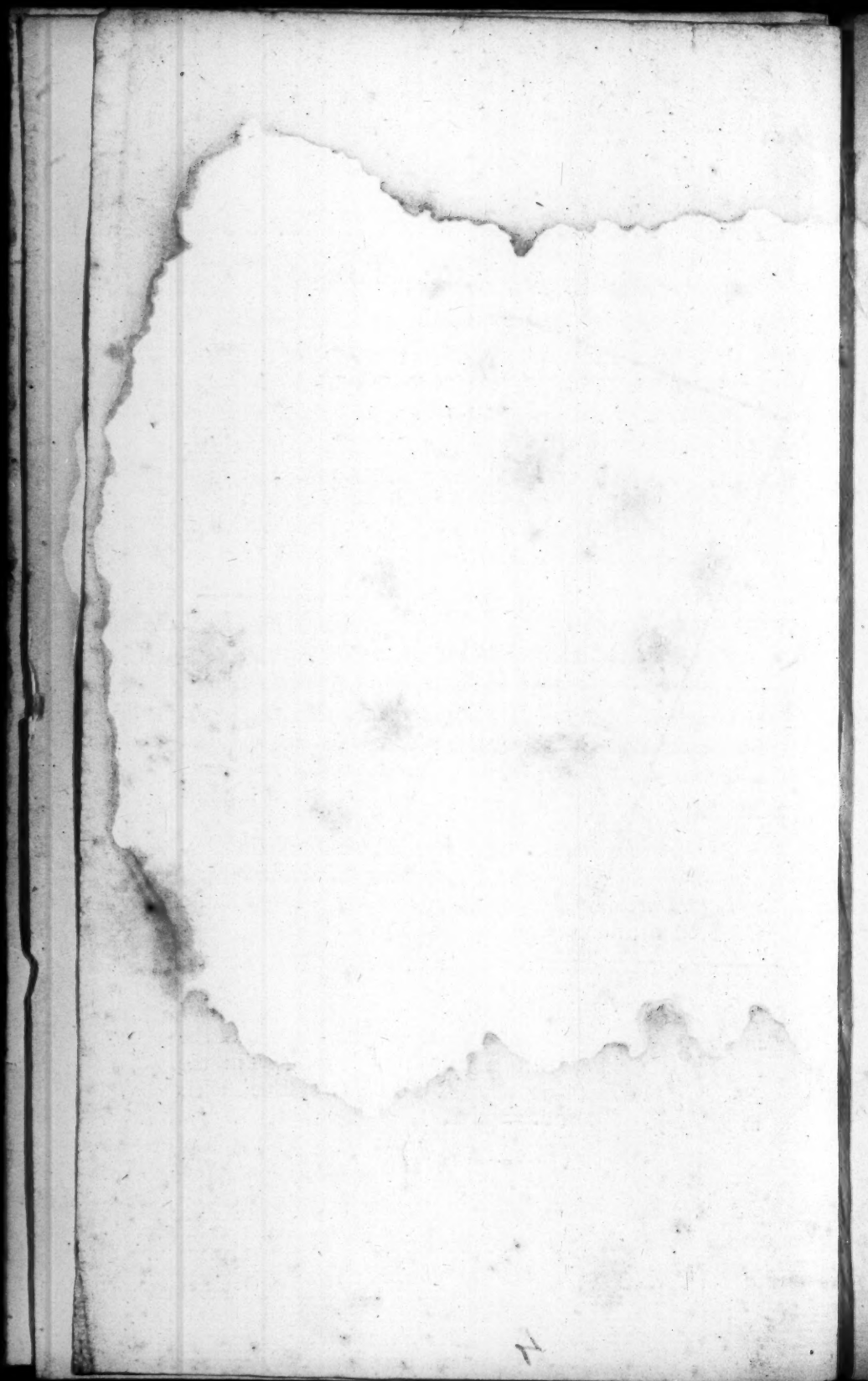
I have made it evident, says Mr. Fancourt, that the Controversy is not about God's Fore-knowledge of what will certainly be, but whether such Actions ought to be reputed free, which were ever certain? — The Greatness of the Divine Love further Vindicated, Pref. p. 1.

Mr. Fancourt has proposed, says Mr. Millar, the main Question — judiciously —, "Whether such Actions ought to be reputed free, which were ever certain? — All future free Actions, future Contingencies, p. 112.

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THE PREFACE.

IN this inquisitive Age, almost every Thing, whether civil or religious, has undergone a new and severe Examination. Among other celebrated Disputes in Theology, that concerning God's Prescience, and Man's Free-will, has not escaped the Disquisition of the Learned. Some, indeed, are ready to censure it, as only a Dispute about a metaphysical Nicety; but others (who have taken a nearer View of it, in its Nature and Consequences) are of a far different Mind. The Controversy, they conceive, will at last resolve into this important Question, Whether there be any Blame in Sin at all? Or, if any, to whom this Blame fairly belongs; whether to the Creator or the Creature? All Sides, it's true, are forward enough to pronounce the Divine Being innocent; but pronouncing and proving are two Things.

There are different Solutions upon this Head. Mr. Fancourt (in the Preface to his Reply to Mr. Millar) has set them in one View; that every One may chuse for himself the Scheme, which to him appears most safe and consistent. The Combitants in this Cause, according to him, may be divided into two Classes, Necessitarians and Anti-necessitarians. The Necessitarians we may subdivide into Decretalists and Anti-decretalists. The Decretalists contend for FORE-KNOWLEDGE and DECREES both; and their Scheme, according to Mr. Millar's Account of it, runs thus. They hold, 1st, That our accountable Actions were originally free, and not necessary. ["The Angels that fell, and our first Parents, says Mr. Millar, might really have abstained from Sin, all Sin, and consequently might have kept themselves from Destruction; and, which is more, MIGHT REALLY have been happy for ever."] (Vid. his Omniscience of God stated; Preface, p. 4.) — 2dly, That yet our accountable Actions were ever fore-known and decreed. ["If the Doctrine of the Prescience of all Events be clearly proven, says Mr. M., it won't be very hard to infer the One from the Other. [I know, says he, the Calvinists generally begin with the Decree, and found Prescience upon it; but if both may be secured the either way, perhaps it may be as well."] (Vid. his Principles of the Reformed Churches stated, &c. Pref. p. 14.) — Tho', 3dly, whatever is fore-known and decreed, they say, is necessary. ["According to the Distinction, which Bishop Burnet says, is so sacred amongst us [Calvinists,] — it was, says Mr. M., impossible for him [Adam] not to fall, in Sensu composito, taking all Things together, because it was impossible that God shou'd be deceived, or his Decree frustrate."] Vid. his Omniscience, &c. Pref. p. 13.

The Anti-decretalists contend for a FORE-KNOWLEDGE without a Decree; and their Scheme, according to Mr. Bliss, is this. — They maintain, 1st, That all our accountable Actions were ever fore-known by God, tho' he never decreed them. ["Mr. F.'s Notion, says Mr. B. is, That the Almighty fore-knows Nothing, but what he has decreed. — And if this was so, says he, (intimating that it is not so) the Consequence indeed wou'd be unavoidable, that Foreknowledge implies the Events to be physically necessary."] (Vid. Mr. Bliss, his Let. p. 34.) — 2dly, That yet our free Actions

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Actions might never have been; tho' it was ever fore-known that they wou'd be. [*"An Action, says Mr. B., which is the Object of the Divine Prescience, depends upon the free Choice of the Creature for its Existence; that is, the Creature may or may not do it, as he thinks fit."*] Ibid. p. 77. — Tho', 3dly, whatever God fore-knows, (they are forced to acknowledge) must be, and cannot but be. [*"On Supposition Sin will be" (which Mr. B. allows to be universally true of what God fore-knows) "it will be, says he, it must be, it cannot but be,"* p. 69. And again, *"An Action fore-known by God, will as certainly, tho' not by the same kind of Necessity, come to pass; as if it was predetermined absolutely; or so, as that in the physical impulsive Sense it must and cannot but be,"* p. 78.]

But the Anti-necessitarian Scheme runs thus; 1st, That our Actions, while free, are what we may prevent. [*"The Will of a moral Creature, so far as it is accountable," (says Mr. Fnacourt, who is of this Class) "is a free Agent, i. e. it either has or had a Power to act, or not to act; or to act this or that." (Vid. his Essay, p. 14.)* — 2dly, That an Action which will be, none can prevent. [*"What will be, says the same Author, is certain; what is certain, is fixed; what is fixed, is no longer free, but necessary. And if it was ever true, that Sin not only might, but wou'd be; it was ever certain, it was ever fixed, it was ever necessary; it was ever true that Sin must be."* Ibid. p. 98.] — 3dly, That what God ever decreed or foreknew, will be. [*"We tell Men, you'll say, God only decrees to permit, or he only infallibly foreknows these Things before all Worlds. But it is, in my Opinion, says Mr. F., but a poor Apology to talk thus: Since, after the Doublings are unfolded, and the Paint wash'd off, the Idea is the same, and carries in it as great a Certainty, Infallibility, and Necessity, that such sinful and hideous Events shou'd be, as the most absolute and peremptory Decree whatsoever."* Ibid. p. 59.] — 4thly, And therefore they contend, that what God ever decreed or fore-knew, was never a free Action; or, what was ever in our Power to prevent. [*"As to what you observe, that an absolute Decree seems to necessitate the Event, I intirely agree with you in it, says Mr. F. — Nay, the very Fore-knowledge of an Event, (if the Fore-knowledge be absolute*
"ana

“and infallible) must imply an equal Necessity also, tho’ it
“shou’d [or does] not cause it.” Ibid. p. 100.]

By this Time, I think, it must be very evident, That if the
Decretalists be in the Right ; All the Villanies in the World,
with every guilty Circumstance relating to them, were all certain
and necessary to be, before all Worlds ; and that to have pre-
vented any one of them, wou’d have been to have proved IN-
FALLIBILITY fallible, and to have made void a Divine
DECREE ; Tho’ the Lord of Hosts have sworn, saying,
Surely as I have THOUGHT, so shall it come to pass ;
and as I have PURPOSED, so shall it stand, *Isa.* 45. 24.
— If the Anti-decretalists be in the Right ; all the Enormi-
ties and Wickednesses of the Creature were eternally certain, and
sure to be, previous to any Decree or Fore-knowledge of God ;
and consequently a blind FATE, superior to, and uncontrou-
lable by either Creature or Creator NECESSARILY en-
sues. — Whereas, if the Anti-necessitarians be in the
Right ; then Man is a moral Agent in the noblest Sense ;
and God hath given us an amazing Proof of his infinite Wil-
dom and Power, in contriving and making Creatures, that
have by their Creator’s Gift, and in Imitation of his own excel-
lent Nature, a Principle of Self-determination : Nay, and the
Holiness, Justice, Goodness, and Veracity of God will ap-
pear, in the highest Degree, what every good Man believes and
must wish them to be.

The Business of the following Letters is to clear the best of
Beings from the vilest Imputation, by shewing, That every Crea-
ture, considered as accountable, has a Dominion over its own
Actions ; and that the Objections urged from an eternal Cer-
tainty of our Actions against their Freedom, have no Founda-
tion but in our Ignorance, particularly of the Divine Attri-
butes. We are “wont (as Dr. Moore observes of the Plato-
nists and Schoolmen) to spread out every Attribute to as in-
finite Excess as we can ; forgetting that one necessary
Measure of all his Attributes, That they be no further ap-
ply’d to him than as they imply Perfection.” Thus the Ab-
surdities of Transubstantiation crept in, in Complement to the
Divine Omnipotence ; and thus the eternal Certainty of our
free Actions, (tho’ a most palpable Contradiction) in Complement
to the Divine Omniscience. As if it was any Act of real
Power to make a Thing to be, and not to be, at the same
Time ;

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Time ; or, any Act of real Knowledge to see a Thing to be, what it is not. "Fore-knowledge of contingent Events (otherwise than that they are contingent) is (as an ingenious Correspondent well observes) so far from being a Perfection in any Being, that, if the Terms are strictly understood, there can scarce be a more contradictory Proposition." Which makes him to add, "I take the whole of the Cause to rest here ; and cou'd never find a Medium between this, and that of such a Certainty as must destroy all real Contingency."

But Mr. Millar will tell us, "It is manifest, there can be no eternal Fore-knowledge of Sin, (which is a contingent Event) "but upon the Supposition that it will be ; for God's Knowledge of what is only possible, says he, is not Fore-knowledge, nor can it with any Truth or Propriety, be so called." (Vid. his D. Omniscience, &c. Pref. p. 3.) — But where's the Impropropriety of calling the Knowledge of what the future Creature will be A B L E to do, Fore-knowledge, any more than the Knowledge of what the future Creature will do ? It is true, nothing but the Knowledge of a future Object, can, with any Truth or Propriety, be called Fore-knowledge. But then he ought to have remembered, that Powers may be future, as well as Acts ; and, considered as future, may be equally fore-known. His wiser Brethren were of this Opinion. "God's Prescience or Fore-knowledge of Things that [may] come to pass, (says a zealous Calvinist) doth go before the Decree ; — but his Fore-knowledge of Things that [shall] come to pass, must follow the Decree." And I wonder how Mr. M. cou'd read, and much more how he cou'd answer Mr. F.'s third Letter ; and yet overlook this remarkable Quotation there, out of Mr. Nels's Antidote against Arminianism, published with the unanimous Approbation of Dr. John Own, Mr. N. Lockier, and Mr. G. Griffith, [sauneh Calvinists all.] (Vid. Mr. F.'s Essay, p. 85. and Mr. Nels's Antidote, p. 10.) By [may] there, Mr. N. must mean, what will possibly be ; by [shall], what will certainly be. And the One as well as the Other, he supposes a proper Object of Fore-knowledge ; so that the Distinction is necessary, was it only to take away the Ambiguity of their own Terms. And in this Sense Mr. F. allowed from the Beginning, that Sin was ever fore-known, viz. as an Event that might possibly be hereafter, tho' not as an Event which wou'd certainly be hereafter ; which is as much

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as the Calvinists themselves will say, except upon the Supposition, that Sin is decreed as well as foreknown. But let us hear Mr. F. speak for himself. "Was it duly considered, says he, how securely some retreat to God's eternal and certain Fore-knowledge of Sin, as FUTURE, as to an impregnable Fortrefs, to establish their Doctrine of God's eternal Decree of Sin, and that Necessity of sinful Actions, which is destructive of all Religion at once; perhaps we should not so easily give in to that unbounded, and (as I take it) groundless Notion of the Divine Prescience; nor think it lost Labour to examine again into the Reasons of God's eternal Fore-knowledge of a free Event as FIX'D and CERTAIN; to see whether this Weapon may not be fairly wrested out of their Hands also." — And again, in the same Paragraph, "I say, (Mr. F. goes on) take away an eternal, infallible, and FIXED Fore-knowledge of an Event confessedly UNFIXED (such as Sin is allowed by most to be) and you stab Antinomianism and Atheism both to the Heart: You put it into the Power of every common Christian to plead effectually the Cause of God's moral Perfections, viz. his Holiness, his Justice, his Goodness and Truth; and to cast the whole and eternal Blame of the Creature upon the Creature. But, says he, grant them that single Point, and they, I fear, will easily triumph over all your Artillery, and, in spite of your strongest Arguments, leave upon the holy and gracious God the infinite Odium of being the first and principal Cause of the Creature's Sin and eternal Damnation; or (at least) run you upon a real and immutable Fatality." (Vid. his Essay, p. 75, 76.) So that the real Dispute is not, whether God fore-knows Sin in any Sense? but, whether he fore-knows Sin to be, what it is not; to be an Event that's certain, and consequently necessary, while it remains uncertain and contingent; and so free either to be, or not to be? And Mr. Millar is very conscious of this, notwithstanding his loud Clamours, as if his Opponents denied God's Fore-knowledge of Sin in general. See his Answer to Mr. F.'s second Preface, p. 1.

What Dr. Cadworth observes, in his Deus Justificatus, or, The Divine Goodness vindicated and cleared, is very much to our Purpose. "Although God know, and have as it were a perfect Scheme (says he) of all future Things possible to be known; yet his Conception or Knowledge of the same Thing
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"when future and possible, and actually existent, is not the same; for when it is actually brought into Being, he acquires a new manner of Knowledge of it; for it is impossible that the Conception of Futurity and actual Existence shou'd be the same," p. 265. Thus, with respect to our free Volitions or Actions, which were only possible, till we our selves had done some Thing to make them certain: Tho' God knew (says Mr. F.) and had a perfect Scheme of all Possibilities from Eternity; yet his Conception or Knowledge of the same Thing, when only possible, and when certainly future, is not the same; for when it becomes certainly future, he acquires a new manner of Knowledge of it, it being impossible that the Conception of only possible, and certainly future, shou'd be the same Conception.

But be this as it will, what Account the Deists can find in this Hypothesis, is beyond my Capacity to comprehend. Yet the Reverend Mr. Blifs is pleased to tell his Friend, "It gives him no Surprise, that the Deists he was speaking of, eagerly embrace Mr. F.'s Scheme," p. 1. It is surprising unto me, however; let us have his Reason therefore: "It serves their Purpose, he says, as it undermines a cogent, and, as some pretend, the only Argument for Christianity, That from Prophecies." What, the only Argument! Neither Mr. Blifs nor his Friend, I hope, are of the Number of these Pretenders. For Nothing is more certain, than that the Christian Revelation, as well as that by Moses, wou'd have stood immovable, upon the Basis of Miracles alone, joined with the Purity of its Doctrines, had there been never a Prediction besides for its Support. But how does it undermine the Argument from Prophecies? Why, says Mr. B., "by supposing none of these in the Old Testament to have been absolute, but all to have depended on one Condition or another." But what if this be a Supposition of his own, and what Mr. F. never suggested? Then all is well still, and the Deists are disappointed. All that he pleads for is this; Events that are absolutely foretold, and must be, cannot absolutely depend on mere Contingencies, that may never be. Thus he explains it in the Preface of his Essay.

"Such Prophecies (says he) as are referable to the Actions of moral Agents, are either only conditional, according to the great Standard, laid down by God himself, with respect to

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“ *the Prediction of National Judgments and Mercies, Jer.*
 “ 18. 7, — 10. *Or, if the Prediction of such Actions be*
 “ *absolute and peremptory, the Actions themselves are no*
 “ *longer free, what may or may not be, but are absolutely*
 “ *determined now, and must be.*”

So that it is enough for his Purpose, that every Prophecy must be either conditional or absolute, either one or the other; and that if the Prediction be absolute, the Action predicted is not now free, what the Creature can prevent, but fixed and necessary. And is he alone in this? The learned Dr. Crew, speaking of an absolute Prophecy, calls it “ *A Declaration of*” the Divine Prescience, looking at any Distance through a “ *Train of infinite Causes known, and unknown to us, upon a*” “ *sure and certain Effect.*” And then, as a Consequence of this, he infers, “ *That the Being of Prophecies*” (meaning such as are absolute) “ *supposeth the Non-being of Contingents; for tho’ there*” “ *are many Things which seem to us to be Contingents, yet were*” “ *they so indeed, there cou’d have been no Prophecy*” [i. e. no absolute Prophecy, which he seems to suppose all Prophecies to be:] “ *And there can be no Contingent seemingly so loose and in-*” “ *dependent, but it is a Link of some Chain.*” (See his Cosmol. Sacra, Lib. 4. Ch. 6.)

Mr. Millar has some Remarks upon this Head, which it may be proper a little to examine here. In the Preface of his Book of the Divine Omniscience, he tells us,

(1st.) “ *That that which Mr. F. calls the great Standard,*
 “ *Jer. 18. is not a Standard of Prophecies at all, but of*
 “ *Promises and Threatnings; and therefore does no way answer*
 “ *his End, p. 6. But in this, I find, the famous Downname and*
 “ *he to differ; who makes all such to be Prophets, “ as by Inspi-*
 “ *ration did FORETELL the Ruin of Sin, and the Reward*
 “ *of Virtue.*” (See his Doctrine of the Bible, p. 1.) That Nineveh should be destroy’d, was a Threatning; and yet (according to Mr. Henry) it was a Prophecy too. “ *This Book*
 “ *of Jonah, says he, tho’ it be placed here in the midst of the*
 “ *prophetical Books of Scripture, yet it is rather an History than*
 “ *a Prophecy.*” But then he adds, “ *One Line of Prediction*
 “ *there is in it, Yet forty Days and Nineveh shall be over-*
 “ *thrown.*” (See his Exposition of Jonah, the Introduction.)
 “ *Prophecy taken strictly is, says the same Commentator, the*
 “ *foretelling of Things to come.*” (See Vol. 4. Preface,

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p. 1.) *These Things to come being the Reward of Virtue or the Punishment of Vice, alters not the Case : It is Prophecy still. — Consult Acts 3. 23. 2 Cor. 13. 2. — Now these prophetic Threatnings and Promises Mr. M. himself acknowledges, are not absolute, but conditional. “ The Promises and Threatnings there intended, relate, says he, only to temporal, national Prosperity, as the Reward of publick and general Virtue or Repentance in any Kingdom ; or to temporal, national Judgments, as the just Punishment of general, prevailing Sin and Impenitence among any People ; which are always to be understood with this Limitation” [i. e. with this Condition] “ according to the plain Declarations of the Word, and the general Sense of the Justice and Goodness of God, which all Nations seem to have had some Apprehensions of.” (Ibid.) — As to what he adds, with respect to such Promises and Threatnings ; That they “ neither suppose nor imply the Futurition of any particular Thing, but only declare the Connexion “ between Obedience and Happiness, Sin and Misery,” p. 7. it is very true, and is exactly Mr. F.’s Sense ; and the Distinction is of great Importance in the present Controversy, and under the present Head : They denote not an absolute, but only a conditional Futurition of such Things. See Mr. F.’s Essay, p. 136, — 139. — Mr. M. goes on ; “ In the Passage referred to, there is, says he, no Prediction of any Thing, “ that the Nations spoken of wou’d do,” (who says there is ?) “ but only of what God wou’d do, [i. e. a Prediction of what God wou’d do] “ in Consequence of their Carriage, whether “ good or bad.” Very right. And therefore we call it conditional. But by the bye ; if it was only a Prediction of what God wou’d do, it was, however, a Prediction notwithstanding, even by his own Confession. So that this great Standard, at last, contains Promises and Threatnings that are predictive or prophetic, Mr. M. himself being Judge ; tho’ he had told us but just before, That “ it is not a Standard of Prophecies “ at all.”*

His (2d) Remark is this ; “ If by only conditional, Mr. F. means uncertain, it is self-evident that an uncertain “ Prophecy, i. e. a Prediction of an Event, which the Prophet doth not certainly foresee, is, at best, but a Conjecture,” p. 7. But what if by a Prophecy that’s only conditional, Mr. F. shou’d intend a Prophecy that is certain, supposing the Condi-

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tion ;

tion ; then it is well still : For then the Prophet may certainly foresee the Connexion between them, tho' the absolute Futurition of the Event be yet uncertain, or rather, not true. But to pass on to Mr. M.'s

(3d) Remark. " If by absolute Mr. F. intends no more than certain, it is manifest, says he, that every Prediction is thus absolute, if it be true." But here we must distinguish ; By an absolute Prediction, Mr. F. means such a Prediction as supposes the absolute Futurition of the Thing predicted, or the absolute Certainty of the Event : Whereas by a conditional Prediction or Prophecy, he intends only such a Prophecy as supposes a Certainty in the Connexion, or that the Connexion between the Event and the Condition is certain, but not the Certainty of the very Condition, upon which the Event depends.

His (4th) Remark follows ; " No Prophecies, says Mr. M., are so absolute, as to foretell that this or that shall be, whatever the free Agent does ; — Such a Notion is as foolish as it is false." True, supposing the Event to depend absolutely upon our Free-Agency. However, some Prophecies are so absolute, even with Mr. M. himself, as to foretel, that this or that the free Agent will do, at a Time that he may never do it ; and yet what will be, he owns must be, and cannot but be. But is it either Wisdom or Truth to talk at such a Rate ? Is it not all one as to say, Freedom is not Freedom ? Or, that a Prophecy which must be accomplished, may never be accomplished ? A Language that is as unscriptural, as it is irrational.

His (5th) Remark proceeds thus ; " No Actions of moral Agents can be so peremptory, (upon Mr. F.'s Principles) as not to be free. For if the Agent is free, he may act or not ; if so the Action may not be : And if it must be, since a necessary Agent is a Contradiction in Terms, Mr. M. asks, who is the Agent ?" I answer ; The Being that acts upon him : Unless (as he sometimes seems to think) a fatal Necessity runs thro' the whole Scale of Beings, from the Creature up to the Creator. For the Power that determines, and might not, is the Agent, is the Actor ; the Being that is determined by another, or that can only determine one Way, is rather acted upon, than active. As to Mr. M.'s

(6th.) And last Remark, That " whatever Mr. F. means by the Action's being absolutely determined now, it is plain, they

“they must be so determined by some Thing or other, either before, or by the Prediction.” I suppose Mr. M. means, by something or other before the Prediction, or by the Prediction itself. If so, right. And therefore we say, it could not be determined by any Agent that did not exist, till after the Prediction: Unless an Event may be fixed, and not fixed, determined and not determined, at the same time. See more upon this Head, in Mr. F.’s Letter to Mr. Norman, p. 26—30. and in his Essay, p. 134, 135. In the mean time, this (I conceive) is very plain, That either the Contingency of the Event, or the Absoluteness of the Prophecy, must be given up.

But to return to Mr. Blis: He tells his Friend, “He owns himself surpris’d at Mr. F., that he shou’d lay so much Stress upon his Hypothesis, as if the Whole of Religion depended upon it.” Why, can there be any Religion, without Liberty? Or, any Liberty, where only one Side is possible? Which the eternal Certainty, or certain Prescience of what they call contingent Events, plainly implies. This, I know, he calls, A denying of One Attribute to secure the rest. But it behoves him to consider, whether he himself, in disputing it, does not, in Effect, deny many Attributes, [I mean the Justice, Goodness, and Holiness of God] to secure only the Name of One, that is, the imaginary Perfection of knowing Nothing to be Something.

I will not enquire, whether it universally holds (however it may be as far as Mr. B.’s Acquaintance goes) that “there is no Likelihood of Antinomianism’s gaining Ground amongst us.” Yet this I may venture to say, If his Observation here be true, it is because the Liberty of the accountable Creature is now better understood and defended than in Times past. Tho’ how to defend it upon his Principles, that all our freest Actions were always absolutely certain, and ever infallibly fore-known as such, is too great a Paradox for me to understand; especially, since what will certainly be, he himself acknowledges must be, and cannot but be, p. 69. — Besides, how does it appear, that “almost every Chapter in the Bible strongly reclaims” (as he expresses it) against Antinomianism? But because the Bible every where speaks of Sinners as in a State of Trial, and as capable (with the Help it reveals and tenders) of preventing their own eternal Destruction. — And yet a Destruction that will certainly come, none can prevent, he himself

self being Judge. And so say the Calvinists, who generally contend, not only that all Events, even the most sinful and penal, were ever decreed, but that the Decree makes them all NECESSARY. (See Mr. Millar's first Preface, p. 14.) Tho' indeed, to shew how dextrous Mr. Millar is, at plucking down with one Hand, what he builds up with the other, at other Times he tells us, " Every Man who acts freely, knows he
 " may act, or not ; and [that] — the Conscience of every
 " Sinner, even the most wicked Wretch upon Earth, witnesseth, that there is not any Sin, which is inevitably committed by him, but that he hath POWER ENOUGH to
 " abstain from it." (See his future Contingencies, p. 114.) So that, wou'd he be consistent with himself, he must grant us, either that some Men are damned for no Sin of their own ; or, that every Man has (or at least had) POWER ENOUGH to prevent his own Damnation : Which is to give up the very Point Mr. Fancourt has all along been contending for, viz. That as we all need Saving Help, so Saving Help may be had by us all, even the most wicked Wretch upon Earth not excepted.

But how to reconcile this, with an eternal and infallible Prescience or universal Decree, particularly that of an absolute, inconditionate Reprobation, is incumbent upon others to shew. In the mean Time, I shall leave the impartial Reader the Judgment of that great Man, Dr. Cudworth, upon this last Head.
 " Having thus declared (says he) the Amplitude and Extent of
 " the Liberty of Man's Will in all its respective Capacities, I
 " shall now manifest and shew how it's taken away by asserting
 " and maintaining of inconditionate Decrees ; which will be
 " no hard Matter to evince, if we consider, that both the Predes-
 " tination of the Good to Life, and of the Reprobates to De-
 " struction, necessarily pervades and casts a fatal Influence upon
 " their whole Lives. I mean, (says he) that that Decree in-
 " vincibly orders and disposes the Actions of Men to their respec-
 " tive Ends ; so that he who is pre-ordained to Happiness, shall
 " certainly and necessarily be good, and the other who is destin'd
 " to Perdition, shall inevitably be wicked and vitious. — A Cast
 " of which Doctrine (he goes on) we have delivered to us by
 " Zanchy in these Words: Non dubitamus itaque confiteri
 " ex immutabili Reprobatione necessitatem peccandi, &
 " quidem

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quidem, sine resipiscentia ad mortem usque peccandi,
 eoque & æternas pœnas dandi, reprobis incumbere. (*Vid.*
De Nat. Dei, cap. 2. in Resp. ad Sophism.) *That is,*
 We doubt not to profess that from the immutable De-
 cree of Reprobation, there lies upon Reprobates a Neces-
 sity of Sinning, and that without Repentance, even un-
 to Death, and consequently of suffering eternal Punish-
 ments. *Piscator likewise will aver the same, (says the*
Doct̃or) and more if you desire it; In summa se tueri fate-
tur, Deum absolute decrevisse ab æterno & efficaciter, ne
quispiam hominum plus boni faciat, quàm reipsâ facit,
aut plus mali omittat quàm reipsâ omittit: that is, That
he defends this Conclusion, that God hath efficaci-
ously from all Eternity so predetermined the Will of Man
to every individual Action, that none can do any more
Good than really he doth, or omit any more Evil than
ipso facto he omitteth. (Vid. Ad amic. dupl. Vorst.
p. 175.) "To these (he proceeds) I shall add Szydlovius
as the worst of the Three, Fateor & ipse ad communem
Sentiendi consuetudinem crudum nimis hoc videri;
Deum posse Blasphemiam, Perjurium, Mendacium, &c.
imperare: — quod tamen verissimum est in se, &c.
that is, I confess that according to common Sense, it
seems very crude to assert, that God can command Blas-
phemy, Perjury, Lying, &c. which yet is most true in
itself. Now following these Principles, it is impossible (says
our learned Author) there shou'd be any such Thing as Virtue
and Vice existing in the World; for all our Actions, whether
Good or Evil, are the necessary Effects of an eternal Princi-
ple acting and over-ruling our Wills, and we are but the Instru-
ments which that invincible Power makes use of for the doing
such and such Actions, and can no more withstand it, than the
Sun cease to make Day and Night. The Apostle speaks of
Men receiving Praise of God for their good Deeds, (1 Cor.
4. 5.) which Reason cannot fathom, if their Wills are neces-
sarily determined ad unum (as the Moralists speak) and acted
by a supernatural and irresistible Power. No Man ever prai-
sed the Sun for circling the Earth, or the Moon for keeping her
Course, because it is impossible they should do otherwise, being
destitute of any spontaneous Principle, and carried by the vio-
lent

"lent Stream of Matter : No more can any One praise or
 "dispraise the Actions of Mankind, when they have no Power to
 "do otherwise, but are inevitably determined to such and no o-
 "ther; and can no more resist, than the Planets stop their constant
 "Gyres in the vast Whirlpools of Heaven. He that merits
 "Praise for doing well," (or, I may add, merits Blame for
 "doing ill) "it is upon this Account, that he might have done
 "otherwise: But when God by a physical Application of his
 "Power determines the Soul to act thus, and leaves it not any
 "Power or Ability of resisting, all the Praise of that Action
 "must be due to God himself, not to Man who was but an In-
 "strument, and cou'd not avoid it. Nemo peccat in eo quod
 "vitare non potest, says St. Austin. Neither can any Action
 "whatever (says Cudworth) be called a Sin in Man, because he
 "is not left a free Agent, but acts fatally and unavoidably, and
 "cannot be disobedient to that superior Force that inacts his Will:
 "So that Murder, Adultery, Oppression, Contempt of Govern-
 "ment, and whatever brutish Action there is else, cannot come
 "under the Denomination of Crimes; but he that commits them,
 "may justly plead that he cou'd not avoid them, his Will being
 "never undetermined, and it was not possible that his weak Soul
 "should hinder the stronger and more powerful Bent and Resolution
 "of Heaven. How then (the Doctor goes on) can God in Ju-
 "stice punish any Man for doing that which he could not
 "help? and, How can that be called a Sin, which is the Ef-
 "fect of a necessary Cause? The Distinction between the Act
 "and the Pravity of the Act, the former of which God wills
 "(say they) and works in us, but not the latter, will stand them
 "in no stead; for in many Actions the Formality of Sin consists
 "in the very Act itself, as in Murder, Adultery, and such-like:
 "Thus the Eating of the forbidden Fruit was a Sin in itself,
 "and we cannot distinguish between the Act and the Vitiosity;
 "for the very Act was forbidden, and the Formality of the
 "Crime consisted not in Adam or Eve's eating after any undue
 "manner; but simply and barely in the very Act of Eating.
 "And so in Sins of Omission, this Distinction likewise fails;
 "nor (concludes the Doctor) will it free Almighty God from the
 "Imputation of being the Author of Iniquity and Vice." (See
 "Dr. Cudworth's Deus Justificatus, or, The Divine Good-
 "ness"

The P R E F A C E. xvii

ness vindicated and cleared, against the Assertors of absolute and inconditionate Reprobation, *p.* 184, — 188.)

I shall conclude therefore with the Words of Wisdom; Thou lovest all the Things that are, and abhorrest Nothing which thou hast made; for never wou'dst thou have made any Thing, if thou hadst hated it, Wisd. xi. 23.

June 6. 1733.

E R R A T A.

PAge 3. Line 10. dele [*fetch'd.*] — *p.* 14. l. 5. from the Bottom, for [*any*] r. [*either.*] — *p.* 19. l. 2. dele [*p.* 62, 63.] l. 17. for [*Face*] r. [*Fate.*] for [*to*] r. [*either to*] — *p.* 37. l. 25. for [*Dr. Jackson*] r. [*Mr. Jackson.*] — *p.* 79. l. 4. after [*not*] add [*here.*] l. 14. for [*to cause*] r. [*a Decree to cause.*] — *p.* 82. l. 2. from the Bottom, for [*he*] r. [*it.*]

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THE



THE
FREE-AGENCY
OF
Accountable CREATURES
Examin'd with Candour, &c.

To the Author of the Grub-street Journal.

Mr. BAVIUS,

I HAVE seen your 134th *Journal*, dated July 27th, 1732, and find by it, that Subjects of the nicest Importance are sometimes allowed a Place in your Paper. Having since received some *Remarks* upon that Part of it, intitl'd, *An Abstract of a lately revived Dispute concerning Liberty and Prescience*, I must desire you, if possible, to insert them in your next.

SIR,
THE *Abstract* which you was so kind to send me, I have carefully read. It relates, I see, to that celebrated Controversy concerning *God's Prescience*, and *Man's Free-will*. As the Author writes with Temper, and like a sincere Enquirer after Truth, I have, according to his own
De-

Desire, made a few Animadversions upon it. If you think they may be of any Service in the Cause of *Liberty*, (without which we seem to be no better than conscious Machines, capable neither of Virtue nor Vice, Praise nor Blame, Rewards nor Punishments;) you have my free Consent to publish them, when, and in what manner you please.

This Gentleman *conjures* his Opponents to be short, and not to say one Word beside the Purpose. I shall therefore, without any further Introduction observe, 1st. That Mr. FAN-COURT (as is obvious to every unprejudiced and impartial Reader) has allowed from the very Beginning, that *what was ever certain, was ever fore-known*. What he denies, is, *that our free Actions were ever certain*; or, *that Actions, which were ever certain, can be free*. His Reason is short and plain; because free Actions, by the Confession of both Parties, either may, or may not be. But when one Side is certain, the other Side is impossible, and cannot be; no more than what is certain can be false.

Therefore, 2dly, tho' "the Certainty of Fore-knowledge does not cause the Certainty of Things, but is itself "founded on the Reality of their [*future*] Existence;" yet *fore-knowledge*, with him, *implies a Certainty in Things*, and *Certainty implies Necessity*, and *Necessity destroys Free-Agency*.

So that, 3dly, when the Author of the *Abstract* contends, that "tho' Fore-knowledge *implies a Certainty in Things*, "yet it is no other than such a Certainty only, as would "be equally in Things, tho' there was no Fore-knowledge;" this, I conceive, is saying nothing towards removing the grand Difficulty; and seems calculated, not so much to establish *Prescience*, as to destroy *Liberty*; not so much to evince God's *Fore-knowledge* of our free Actions, as that there are no *free Actions* to be fore-known. Which must, I am pretty confident, be the real Case, was his Argument in the next Paragraph just and conclusive, *viz*, "Whatever now is, 'tis certain that it is; and [therefore] "it was Yesterday, and from Eternity, as certainly true, "that the Thing would be to Day, as it is now certain "that it is." Whereas the present or past Existence of a Thing is an Argument, indeed, that it was *ever possible* before, not that it was *ever certain*. — Let us suppose this Gentleman's *Abstract* to have been a contingent or free Performance; what, upon the whole, he either might, or might

might not have made : What Mr. *F.* asserts is, whilst it remained free and contingent, it was at that time neither *certain* that he would, nor *certain* that he would not write it ; but only in his Power, as a free Agent, to have made *either* certain. For when his writing becomes *certain*, his not writing becomes *impossible* ; because what will be, must be, and cannot but be.

This, I apprehend, is set in a very easy and convincing Light in the *Appendix* to his *Letter to Mr. NORMAN*. Where, in the Compass of a Two-penny Pamphlet, that has undergone a third Impression, you have (as I conceive) a clear and decisive View of the present Controversy. “ I would ask, says Mr. *F.* why can’t we recall what is past ? “ But because to recall it, is to make it not past ; and so it “ would be both past and not past. Why can’t we hinder “ what is ? But because to hinder it, is to make that it is “ not ; and so it would be true that it is, and yet true “ that it is not. Why can’t we do the thing that is im- “ possible ? But because to do it, is to prove that it is pos- “ sible ; and so it would be both possible and impossible. “ For the same Reason it is, that none can prevent what “ will be ; because to prevent it, is to make that it will “ not be ; and so true, and not true, that it will be.” *p.* 12.

— I durst undertake for him, that he shall venture the whole Controversy upon this single Point, *Whether whatever is now certain, was ever certain ?* And if our Author can fairly demonstrate the affirmative, Mr. *F.* shall yield him, that what we call free Actions were *ever certain*, and certainly *fore-known from Eternity* : Tho’ how to prove they were *ever free* also, and what we might have prevented, will be the Question.

4thly, “ Bare Prescience, we’ll grant him, has no Influence at all, upon any thing ; nor contributes, in the “ least, towards making it necessary, any more than the “ simple Knowledge of it, when it is done.” But still the Difficulty continues in its full Strength, how it came to be true [of Sin, for Instance,] that it was *ever certain*, which God’s Fore-knowledge always supposes. To say, it was made so by an Act of the Divine Will, stains the Divine Purity : To say, it was certain, antecedently to any Act of the Divine Will, is to make it in its own Nature necessary, and to establish a fatal Necessity of all that we call Sin ;

and

and in both Cases the Free-Agency of the Creature is gone.

5thly, As to what he adds, "'Tis true; the manner
 " how God can foresee future Things, without a Chain
 " of necessary Causes, is impossible for us to explain di-
 " stinctly;" I answer, if he can solidly prove, that all our
 freest Actions were always future or *ever certain*, we'll allow
 they were *ever foreseen*, without giving him the Trouble of
 explaining it at all, and much less of *explaining it distinctly*.
 Let them be foreseen in the *Glass of the Divine Will*, or by
 means of God's *Eternity being actually commensurate to all Du-*
ration, and so by the *Presentiality and Existence of all Things in E-*
ternity, or any other way he pleases, we will not contend with
 him; tho' this (as our Author himself justly observes) is but
 to *darken Difficulties with a shew of Knowledge*. However,
 in the mean time, he would do well to *explain* a little more
distinctly, the Consistency of what follows, *viz.* that "Cer-
 " tainty of Event does not, in any sort, imply Necessity."
 Since, by his own Confession, the Event that's *certain*,
 must be; else it is beyond me to understand his Meaning,
 when he asks, "Will there not yet, — in the Nature of
 " Things, be the same *Certainty* of Event, in any one of
 " our Actions, as if they were never so *fatal* and *necessary*?"
 To conclude: What God infallibly foreknows, will be;
 the Actions of Free-Agents, whilst contingent, only may
 be: and therefore are no more the Object of such a *Fore-*
knowledge, than a Square-Circle is an Object of *Power*.
 He that can *foreknow* the one, I presume, may *do* the
 other.

August 2. 1732.

I am, Sir, Yours, &c.

To the Printer of Berington's EVENING POST.

S I R,

AS your Paper has *Variety* of Readers; a *Variety* of Subjects may make it the more generally entertaining. The following Letter is in Defence of *free Agency*; a Subject of the utmost Importance in all Controversies, whether *Moral* or *Divine: Virtue* and *Vice*, *Religious* and *Irreligious*, being only Names, if the Creature be not free.

I am, Yours, &c.

To Mr. ELIOT:

S I R,

BY yours of the 12th of *August*, published in the *Grubstreet Journal*, [No. 137] you chuse, I see, to consider your self as a *Second* to the Author of the *Abstract*, in the Dispute about *Liberty* and *Prescience*. The Province you take upon you is to demonstrate, that *Whatever is now certain, was ever certain*. And this you do, in Answer to that Part of my Remarks in the 136th *Journal*, where I promised for Mr. Fancourt, "That he shou'd venture the whole Controversy upon this single Point. And if the *Abstracter* cou'd fairly demonstrate it, Mr F. shou'd yield him, that what we call *free Actions*, were ever certain, and certainly *foreknown* from *Eternity*; tho' how to prove they were ever free also, and what we might have prevented, will be the Question." Now, what you have to offer upon this Head, you say, is only by way of *Elucidation*, that you might, if possible, set the Matter in such a Light as may carry Conviction.

"Let us suppose, say you, a future possible Action, for Instance Mr. Fancourt's answering these Reflections; which we will conceive as free and contingent, viz. that it may, or may not be." But why do you suppose his Answering to be future; what will be, while it is conceived as an

B

Action

'Action that *may never be*? Is not this to beg the very Thing
 in Question?—You go on; "Of such a Performance,
 "however, may it not be said, that it is now certain that
 "it will be, or that it will not be?" Yes; that he will do
 one of the two, is now certain: Doubtless, he'll answer, or
 not answer. But whether of the two, is yet uncertain; sup-
 posing either of the two as yet possible: Because, when one
 side is certain, the other side is impossible; unless a Thing
 may be certain and not certain at the same time.—But
 you proceed; "And whethersoever shall happen, may it
 "not be said, it was, ever, as certain that it shou'd hap-
 "pen,—as it will be, after it shall happen, that it did
 "happen?" I conceive not; and my Reason is this, Of
 an Answer that *has been made*, it can never be true that it
has not been made; no more than an Action can be both *past*
 and *not past*: Whereas, of an Answer *not yet made* it is
 now true, or, at least, there was *once* a time when it was
 true, that it *might not* have been: Otherwise how was it
 at any time a free or contingent Action, what *might* or
might not have been? Therefore when you add, "And as its
 "having happened, after it shall happen; will be no Ar-
 "gument that it was *necessary* it shou'd happen: we readily
 grant it: But then the Reason is, because its bare *having*
 happened is no Argument, neither, that it was *certain* be-
 fore that it shou'd happen; the *past* Existence of a Thing
 being only an Argument that it was before *ever possible*, not
 that it was *ever certain*. But we can by no means allow you
 what follows; "Neither ought the Certainty of its being
 "to happen before it shall happen, to be looked upon as at
 "all implying any *Necessity*, or destroying *free Agency*:"
 This Consequence, I say, will not be allowed you, unless
 it cou'd be proved, that what is *certain*, *may never be*. For
 if what is *certain*, *must be*, (as Mr. Blifs, Mr. Norman, Mr.
 Millar, and the nameless Author, have all yielded to Mr.
 Fancourt already) it will follow, that what is *now certain*,
 was either *not ever certain*, or was *ever necessary*, as well
 as *certain*. And indeed, otherwise, how can the Ab-
 stracter's Observation hold, That "there is, in the Nature
 "of Things, the same Certainty of Event, in any one of
 "our Actions, as if they were never so fatal and *necessary*."
 —Or, I might argue thus, if what is *now certain*, was *ever*
certain; then, by Parity of Reason, what is *now necessary*,

[II]

was ever necessary. And since what is now certain, is now necessary, (unless, as has been observed, a Thing may be certain and not certain at the same time) it will follow, that our free Actions, tho' now certain, were on this account no more ever certain, than they were ever necessary. But that they were ever necessary, is contrary to the Supposition, viz. that they were once contingent, what either might, or might not have been.

The Fallacy, I conceive, lies here: You suppose an immediate Opposition between what *will be*, and what *will not be*; as if all Things that come into Existence were ever of one of these two Ranks. Whereas, as it is the Property of such Effects, as depend upon an eternal Chain of necessary Causes, that they were ever certain, or what ever would be; (because there never was a Time when any free Agent could come between, to prevent their Existence;) so it seems to be the Property of contingent Events, or of such Actions as depend upon free Agency, that they were ever possible indeed, but no more, till such time as the Agent itself hath done some Thing to make them certain, i. e. Of Actions that may, or may not be; or which may be either *thus*, or *thus*; it is not yet true that they *will be*, nor yet true that they *will not be*, but only in the Power of some free Agent to make either true. Now, if neither Side be yet true, for God to view either Side as true, would be to see more Things to be true than really are true; or to view that to be certain, which is only possible: But Mr. Fancourt, as I take it, has sufficiently expos'd and confuted this plausible Piece of Sophistry already, in his Reply to Mr. Millar, p. 54, 56. And as your Elucidation, being inserted in a Weekly Paper, will naturally fall under the Eye of many Thousand Readers, that have never seen that Book, you will bear with me, if I do him the Justice to transcribe his Words.

“ These two Propositions, says he, Mr. M. will write
 “ again in this Controversy; Mr. M. will not write again
 “ in this Controversy; it may be said are contra-
 “ dictory Propositions, and therefore can neither be both
 “ true, nor both false: Whereas, (supposing his writing
 “ again to be now a contingent Action, what upon the
 “ whole either may, or may not be) what I affirm, says he,
 “ is, they are only contrary Propositions; and tho' both
 “ cannot be true, they may be both false, i. e. It is as yet

neither true that he *will* write again; nor true that he *will not*, but only true that he *may* do either; or in his Power as a free Agent to make either true." And a little lower,

"This, says Mr. F. being the Hinge upon which the whole Controversy turns, give me leave, for Variety's Sake, to illustrate the Matter with another Example, viz. of Cain's murdering Abel. And here to be contradictory, the Propositions, shou'd not run thus, [it is true that] Cain *will* murder Abel; or [it is true that] Cain *will not* murder Abel. For (as he argues a little before) since whilst one Side is true, the other Side, by Mr. M's own Confession, is certainly false; this latter must be impossible to be true, and consequently is *not contingent*; unless a Thing can be both *false* and *true*, at the same time. He proceeds. But to be contradictory, the Proposition should run thus, *It was ever true, that Cain wou'd murder Abel*, or, *it was not ever true, that Cain wou'd murder Abel*; I say, it was *not* ever true, tho' eventually he did murder him. The actual Murder proves indeed, it was always possible, what might be; not that it was always certain what wou'd be, otherwise it wou'd never have been in his Power to have prevented the Murder. — As it is one Thing to say, *Water is hot*, or *not hot*: One of them is certainly true, the other as certainly false. And another Thing to say, *Water is hot*, or *cold*. These can't, indeed be both true, but they may be both false; for it may be neither hot, nor cold, but *luke-warm* only."

Mr. Millar wou'd do well to lay his Axe to the Root, and try his Strength here: To what Purpose is it to multiply Volumes, full of devouring Words. The Abstracter and your self are truly imitable in this Particular, by whose Candour and good Consideration (to return your Civility) the Controversy about Liberty and Prescience is brought into such a Compass, that, notwithstanding the Abstruseness of the Point, a Man may pretty well see where he is; and almost hope to come to a Resolution."

I shall wait your Answer; who am, S I R;

Aug. 22. 1732.

Your most obedient humble Servant, &c.

A Second LETTER to Mr. ELIOT.

S I R,

IN my Reply to your Elucidation, &c. I have, I think, demonstrated, That our free Actions were not *always* certain, but are *only possible*, 'till we our selves have done something to make them certain. Now Mr. F.'s Opponents do, with one Consent, allow, "That in Reality Things are supposed CERTAIN, before they are known or foreknown." But I design a more particular Examination of this great Subject, the Free Agency of accountable Creatures; and to defend it against the most material Objections, fetch'd either from Reason or Revelation. And therefore let the first Question be this;

Question 1. *Whether an accountable Creature MUST BE a free Agent?*

It is the Affirmative I undertake to prove. But before I mention my Reasons, it mayn't be improper to explain a little the Terms themselves, and to state the Question more distinctly.

1. The Creatures we are treating of are intelligent Beings, or Beings endowed with these two Principles, the Understanding and Will. The Understanding is given us for a Director and Adviser, but not for an absolute Lord or Ruler. 'Tis the Will that is properly the moral Principle, or moral Agent within us; and what therefore we are chiefly to consider in this Place.

2dly, An accountable Creature is such a thinking Being as is capable of Virtue and Vice, of Praise and Blame, of Rewards and Punishments; i. e. as is in a State of Trial, or under a moral Government; which is a Government by Laws, enforced by proper Sanctions, and instituted for the common Good.

3dly, An Agent in the Question before us, is one that has a Self-determining Power, or a Principle of moving it self. He that is not in such a Sense an Agent, does do Nothing,

thing, can do Nothing : Proper Action is above his Sphere ; he is passive in all his Motions. So that if at any Time he moves wrong, it is because he is moved wrong ; and the Fault, if any, must be imputed to that Self-moving Principle that directs and determines his Motions.

4thly, All Free-Agency is opposed to Necessity. Now that is said to be necessary, which must be so, and cannot be otherwise. And the Necessity is differently denominated, according to the different Cause or Reason of it. If it be a Necessity or Obligation that arises from the Laws of one that has an Authority over us, and a Right to command, it is a moral Necessity ; i. e. in such a Case it is morally necessary, or a plain Duty for us to obey. Free-Agency is not inconsistent with this Kind of Necessity, but it is rather necessary we should be free, that we might be under Law, and really accountable.—If the Necessity arises from the inward Make, and natural Constitution of the intelligent Being, it is call'd an internal or natural Necessity. But if it arises from any outward Constraint, or Restraint, (especially if it be apparent) then we stile it an external or forcible Necessity.—When an Agent is free from an outward Necessity, or a Necessity of Force ; but yet what it chuses, it is under an inward or natural Necessity to chuse ; this Freedom (if it deserves the Name of Freedom) is called a Liberty of Spontaneity, or Voluntariness. Thus the Actions of the Soul are said to be free with this spontaneous or voluntary Freedom, when it pursues any Object, performs any Act, or chuses any Pleasure, tho' it cannot but pursue, perform and chuse them ; In this dilute Sense of the Word, every Act of the Will is, and must be free ; for every Act is spontaneous and voluntary ; or, in other Words, every Act of the Will is an Act of the Will. But this is not the Liberty we are now disputing about.

5thly, The Free-Agency before us is opposed to each Kind of Necessity, viz, both inward and outward. And it is called a Liberty of Indifference or Choice. " Whatsoever is any way necessary cannot in this Sense be called free. Whensoever the Will is necessarily determined to any Act or Object by any Thing without or within itself, it has not a Liberty of Choice or Indifference," which lies in a Power to act or not to act ; or, to act this or that.

6thly, Tho' in the Nature of Things the *Will* is the chief *Agent*, and *Volition* is *Action* in the *properest Sense*; yet we sometimes distinguish between a *Liberty of Volition*, and a *Liberty of Action*. The one is a *Liberty of the Will*; the other is rather a *Liberty of the inferior and executive Powers*. " 'Tis this *Freedom of Volition or chusing*, which is properly the *Liberty of an intelligent Being*, and necessary to make us *accountable Creatures*; and not the *Freedom of the inferior Powers from a Necessity of Nature or Force in acting*, or in *executing the Determinations of the Will*. There are many Cases, where the *Will* may be *free to chuse*; but the *Man* is not *free*, or at *Liberty to act*. Thus (as an ingenious Writer upon this Subject illustrates it) a Person whose Mouth is stopp'd, may *chuse* to speak or to keep Silence; he is *free to chuse either*, so far as his *Volition* goes; but he is not *free to do either*. For he has not a Power to speak, if he did chuse it; but is under a *Necessity* to keep Silence."

7thly, It is indeed a Dispute with some, whether every real Agent be not a *free Agent*? i. e. Whether a *Liberty of Indifference or Choice* does not enter into the very Idea of proper Agency? Or, whether any thing can in strictness be an *active Principle*, that is not *free*; that has not a Power to *act* or to *suspend its Act*; or to *act thus or thus*. But be this as it will, we chuse to put the Question not about the Agency only, but about the *Free Agency* of accountable Creatures; because Use has prevailed to call many Things (both *natural and artificial*) *active Beings*, that are formed for *Motion*; tho' the Activity with which they are endowed, was impressed upon them in their first Formation, either by *Nature* or by *Art*; and tho' their Principle of Motion be not *indifferent and free*, but determined to *one Side only*. We are now speaking of Beings that are strictly *free*, whether they will (for Instance) chuse to honour God their Maker, or dishonour him; to do good to their Neighbour, or to do him hurt; to keep themselves sober, or to make themselves drunk; that have a Power to *chuse or refuse* which they please; and therefore for which they are truly *accountable*.

8thly, As the Will has a Power to *chuse* or to *refuse*, to *chuse one Thing* or the contrary; so it has a Power to *fix its Choice*, to *make it abiding and persevering*. And if it

was

was not so; why do we say, such a one is a *resolv'd* Man? Why do we *endeavour* to come, in any Case, to a *fixed* Resolution? Why are we commanded to be *stedfast*, *unmoveable*? Why is Salvation promised unto such, as *endure unto the End*? And why does the Psalmist humbly boast, *My Heart is fixed, my Heart is fixed*? Nay, upon the contrary Hypothesis, we cou'd never be *certain*, our *Wills* wou'd chuse the same Thing twice, or two Moments together; the *Will* wou'd be a Principle liable to an *eternal Flutter*, but incapable of any *steady* Purposes or Pursuits whatsoever.

9thly, The Way in which the Choice of the Will is usually made, and its *Fixedness* is generally introduced, is by an *Application* of the Mind to *Light* and *Evidence*. And that intelligent Beings may not, by a *Misapplication* or *Neglect* of the Light and Evidence that surrounds them, make a *wrong Choice*, they have, considered as *accountable*, a *Power* to *suspend* the *Act* of their Choice from being determined *for* or *against* the Thing proposed, 'till they have examined, whether, in its *Nature* and *Consequences*, it be proper to make them happy, or no. And now, that they might not be *fatally* deceived, their kind Creator has took Care, that such Reasons for their *Duty*, and on the Side of their real *Happiness*, shall ever be in their Reach, as shall vastly outweigh, in themselves, any Thing they can fairly put in the opposite Scale against them. And God has given them a *Power* to put these Reasons under their own Eye, *all* as well as *some*, and to observe the Difference upon the *Whole*. And as "the *Will* can do no more, than put itself as it *can*, under the Influence of Light and Evidence, of Motives and Encitements; so, if their be nothing in the Object thus *presented*, thus *perceived* and *weigh'd*, to *ascertain* their Choice, or to render their Choice *fixed* and *steady*, the Will must remain, after all, a fantastical, whimsical Power: And whether it chuses *well* or *ill*, can be no more virtuous or vicious in its Choice, than the lucky or unlucky, but *casual* Concourse of Atoms; or than the *blind* Determinations of Chance or Fortune are so." Indeed, if there is no superior Fitness or Goodness in Things; or if it cannot be discovered by the *Understanding*, but the Objects proposed appear, upon the best Enquiry, *equally fit* or *good*; there the Will is left without a Guide or Director,

rector, and therefore if it will chuse at all, it must make its Choice by its own *arbitrary* Determination. But then such a *Preference* or Choice is neither good nor bad; worthy neither of Praise nor Blame, of Rewards nor Punishments; and so it is not such a Choice for which we are accountable; our *chusing* or *refusing* being, in such Circumstances, perfectly *indifferent*; i. e. it was absolutely indifferent, *whether* of the two, we chose; tho' it might not be altogether indifferent, whether we chose, or no. One of the two might be a *Duty* to chuse; tho' *which* of the two, wou'd be *indifferent*, i. e. supposing an *equal Fitness*.

10thly, As the Will has a *Power*, not only to *chuse*, but to *fix* its Choice; so this *fixed Choice* (usually, if not always) becomes a *fixed Rule* to its own Conduct, till a different Face of Affairs shall invite it to fresh Enquiries, and other Resolutions. The Will stands bound as it were by its own *Act* or *Choice*, 'till a new State of Things presented, or a *Review* of the old State, (brought on by some Disappointment, unexpected Incident or Occurrence) sets it free again from the Laws it had made unto itself. — If the *superior Fitness* or *Goodness* of Things directs and influences our Choice, we act *wisely*; if such *superior Fitness* or *Goodness* cannot, upon just Examination, be discovered by us, the *Mistake* of our *Judgment* and the *Choice* of the Will that follows, are *innocent* and *blameless*; but if we give up ourselves to a *rash* Determination of *Judgment* and *Choice*, under such *Prejudices* as might be resisted, we become *culpable*, and act *foolishly*. “ And our Faultiness has greater or less Degrees, according to the different Opportunities, Advantages, and Capacities we had to examine, judge, and chuse aright.”

So much for the *Explication* and *State* of the Question, *Whether an accountable Creature MUST BE a free Agent?* My *Reasons* for the *Affirmative*, you may expect in my next; unless any *Animadversions* upon my Last, shou'd divert me from it. I am, with great Respect,

Dec. 1st,

Sir,

1732.

Yours, &c.

A Third LETTER to Mr. ELIOT.

S I R.

Dec. 8, 1732.

HAVING shewn in my Last what we mean by an accountable Creature, and what, by Free-Agency; I now come to offer my Reasons, why an accountable Creature must be a free Agent. And that you may not censure it as a needless Task, give me leave to remind you of a Quotation or two in Mr. F.'s Essay: By which it will appear that the Free-Agency of the Creature, whether considered in its original or lapsed State, is, as explained by us, flatly denied by many. He there directs you to a Sermon, on Divine Providence, where the Author asserts, that the Providence of God, by an irresistible and unchangeable Influence, "determines every Motion of the Will, as well as those Acts which are proper to the outward Man." So that, according to this Gentleman, we are bound, upon Pain of eternal Death, to resist that which is irresistible, and to change that which is unchangeable. And this Consequence, tho' so very shocking, that Author contends for, even with Regard to innocent Creatures. For he adds, "Nor can I conceive any other Reason of the Entrance of Sin on the angelick or humane Nature, which were both created pure and upright, but this, that God was pleased to withhold those supporting Influences, which were essentially necessary for their standing in their Purity and Uprightness, upon which their Fall necessarily ensued." Vid. Essay, p. 4. 5. Hereby making the actual Fall of Angels and Men as necessary as their very Being; and so to be no more their real Fault that they were Sinners, than it was that they were Creatures. Mr. M. (tho' his present Sentiments seem to be somewhat different) went yet farther, and made it the common Opinion of his Brethren, that the Creature and Creator both, are under an universal Necessity, in all their Volitions and Actions. "That the Liberty or Freedom of the Will consists in an Indifference

"rence to this or that, this Maxim, says he, your Adver-
 "saries", p. 62, 63. [meaning *the Calvinists*] "absolutely
 "deny, and it appears to them manifestly false; since no
 "such Indifference, they think, *is* or *can* be found in a
 "rational Agent, *finite* or *infinite*." Now what is this
 but to say, That all Things are *absolutely necessary*, and
 what were ever beyond the Power of the Creature or of the
 Creator either to prevent or alter? The Consequence of
 which is, that *Virtue, Praise, and Laws*, are but empty
 Sounds. This a late *ingenious Author* has set in a just and
 strong Light. "The Scheme, says he, which determines
 "the Will always and certainly by the Understanding,
 "and the Understanding by the Situation and Appearance
 "of Things, seems to take away the true Nature and
 "Distinction of Vice and Virtue; for the sublimest Vir-
 "tues and the vilest of Vices seem rather to be Matters
 "of *Fact* and *Necessity*, flowing naturally and necessarily
 "from the Existence, the Circumstances, and present
 "Situation of Persons and Things: For this Existence
 "and Situation necessarily makes such an Appearance to
 "the Mind; from this Appearance flows a necessary Per-
 "ception and Judgment concerning these Things; this
 "Judgment necessarily determines the Will; and thus by
 "this Chain of necessary Causes *Virtue* and *Vice* wou'd lose
 "their Nature, and become *natural* Ideas and necessary
 "Things, instead of *moral* and free Actions: and thus
 "there wou'd be Nothing really rewardable in the One,
 "or blameable and punishable in the Other. This also
 "the *Atheists* and the *Fatalists*, says the same Author,
 "have formed into so strong an Argument, as 'tis very
 "difficult to give a fair Answer to them," viz. upon the
 above-mention'd Hypothesis. *Vid. An Essay on the Free-*
dom of Will, in God and in the Creatures.

To avoid such Absurdities as these, we say, That our
 accountable *Volitions* and *Actions* were free and not necessary;
 and that God knew them to be so. For if in humane
 Actions, *i. e.* in Actions of *Morality* there be a *Fate*,
 "then (as Bishop Taylor rightly observes) there is no *Con-*
 "tingency" [or *Free Agency*] "and then all Deliberation
 "was the greatest Folly in the World; because, since only
 "one Part is possible, the other Part is but a *Chimæra*,
 "and so not subject to Consultation.—If there be no

" Liberty in the Will, a Fool and a Wise Man differ not;
 " —a good Man, and a bad, save only that one hath a
 " better Star; they differ as a strong Man, and a weak;
 " but tho' one be the better Thing, he is not the better
 " Man." Vid. his *Ductor Dubitantium*. Or, as Mr. F.
 himself expresses it, " If Angels and Man had not a Power
 " by their Creation, to stand or fall, but were (without
 " their own Choice) put into such Circumstances as they
 " cou'd not prevent, and yet cou'd not resist, but which did
 " inevitably determine them to one Side, and that the
 " wrong Side too; then they were so far from being mo-
 " ral Agents, that they were not in these Circumstances
 " any Agents at all; were not active, but acted by some
 " foreign, or at least invincible Impulse. And so the
 " Devil was so far from being in any guilty Sense accessory
 " to Man's Destruction, or Adam to that of his Posterity's,
 " that they were neither of them either Principals or Acces-
 " saries in their own Destruction. And if this be our present
 " State, whether it be by the Law of our Creation, or as
 " a Punishment of Adam's Fall; yet still we have no actual
 " Transgressions of our own, nor are we capable of any. For,
 " according to this View of Things, we must be incapable
 " of acting at all, whether right or wrong; and when we
 " move, (let it be either with or against Law) we are only
 " actuated and moved by another." Vid. his *Essay*, p. 24, 25:
 —And this is so plain a Case, that the greatest Asserters of
 our captivated State by the Fall, have some of them been
 obliged to recede at last from the Rigour of their Opinion.
 " Luther went on long, says Bishop Burnet, as he at first
 " set out, with so little Disguise, that whereas all Parties
 " had always pretended, that they asserted the Freedom of
 " the Will, he plainly spoke out, and said the Will was
 " not free, but enslaved. Yet before he died, he is reported
 " to have changed his Mind; for tho' he never owned
 " that, yet Melancthon, who had been of the same Opinion,
 " did freely retract it; for which he was never blamed by
 " Luther." Vid. Bishop Burnet's Exposition of the Articles,
 p. 151. And what makes this the more probable, is, the
 Conversation that passed betwixt the Bishop and a very
 eminent Divine among the Lutherans in Germany. When
 the Bishop pressed upon him an Union with the Calvinists,
 his Reply was, " They differed about important Matters,
 " con-

“ concerning the Attributes of God, and his Providence;
 “ concerning the Guilt of Sin, whether it was to be charg’d
 “ on God or on the Sinner; and whether Men ought to
 “ make good Use of their Faculties, or if they ought to
 “ trust to an *irresistible* Grace.” *Vid.* the Bishop’s Preface
 to his Exposition, p. 8, 9, 10. so that by this Time, Sir,
 you will, I believe, allow me, it is not a *needless* Enquiry,
Whether an accountable Creature must be a Free Agent? i. e.
Whether it ought not to be endow’d with a Power undeter-
mined, either in its own Nature, or by any external Force, to
the Choice either of Good or Evil; but yet which is capable
of determining itself, by chusing or refusing either? —
 The Affirmative is what I am to prove, and my Reasons are
 such as these;

1st. For a Creature to be free, is a Thing not impossible.
 Now most, I presume, will agree with me in this, That if
 any Creature can be free, an accountable Creature ought to
 be so. But if no Creature is capable of Liberty, it must be
 for one of these two Reasons, either because there is no
 free Agent to communicate it, or because the Communica-
 tion of it would be a Contradiction. To say the former, is
 meer *Hobbiism*. Mr. Hobbes supposes, that “ nothing taketh
 Beginning from itself, but from the Action of some other
 immediate Agent, without itself.” *Vid.* His Treatise of
 Liberty and Necessity, p. 71. i. e. Nothing can move itself,
 but is, and must be moved by another. But was this uni-
 versally true, “ the Divine Being itself wou’d be no Princi-
 ple of its own Actions, but must depend upon the Action
 of some other Agent, before or without itself, in all its De-
 terminations.” Or, if the Supposition is to be understood
 only of Creatures, then he allows us, that the Acts of the
 Creator take their Beginning from himself, and not from the
 Action of some other immediate Agent without himself;
 and therefore that a Principle of Self Determination is not
 a Contradiction in Terms, but a very possible Thing, in that
 it is a Perfection which is actually existing in the first Cause.
 — So that the only Dispute will be, whether a Self-moving
 Principle be a communicable Perfection, or no? Whether
 the creating of a Being endowed with Free Agency, be not
 an Over-match for God’s infinite Wisdom and Power?
 But why shou’d it, any more than the creating of a Being
 merely passive? “ For since every Species of Beings finds
 itself

itself more inclined and *capable* of communicating its own *Likeness*, than that which is *unlike itself*; why shou'd we think it *less becoming*, or *less possible*, for the Divine Being to derive unto some of his Creatures a *self moving Principle*, (which is what he certainly has himself, and which is therefore a Branch of his own Image) than for the Divine Being to derive a *Power to be moved*, and *acted upon* by something *without*; which is, at most, a more disparable Branch of the Divine Likeness." — Now if a Power of *Self determination* be *possible* for a Creature to have; who will say, it is not *expedient* that an accountable Creature shou'd *actually have* it? Since "for God to impart a *Capacity* to know our Duty, without bestowing an *Ability* to perform it; wou'd have been to have imparted it for no wise and valuable Ends."

2dly, If a *free Power* in the Creature be a *possible Thing*, we have Reason to believe it to be a *real Thing*: And if *any* Creatures have such a Power, Man, who finds himself to be an *accountable Creature*, has all the Reason in the World to believe that *he* has it.

We have Reason to believe this *possible Power* is a *real Power*. All will allow they have an *Idea*, a clear and distinct *Idea*, of the *Liberty* we are talking of, (whether there be, or ever was any free Power in the Creature to answer this *Idea*, or no;) but mayn't it deserve to be considered, whether the very *Idea* of the Power does not imply the *Existence* of it? Or, whether it be possible for Creatures that are supposed to be under an absolute and universal *Necessity* in all their Thoughts, Volitions and Actions, and that converse with nothing else, to raise in their own Minds any nobler *Idea* than that of *Necessity*? Shou'd it be said, that the *Notion* of Liberty was proper to be communicated to the Creature, that it might ascribe this *Glory* to its Maker; but then had not a double Care been needful, that the Creature in all the Acts of its Will shou'd *feel* itself impell'd and mov'd by another, that it might not be tempted (as in *Fact* it is) to assume this peerless Honour unto itself?

Now, If this *free Principle* be in *any* Creatures, Man has the highest Reason to ascribe it to himself; since the Divine *Laws* themselves, with the *Rewards* and *Punishments* annexed to them, do so naturally and powerfully dispose him to believe, he is not unavoidably determined to one

Side;

Side, but might have chosen Obedience as well as Disobedience, and Life as well as Death.

3dly, Why have accountable Creatures not only an *Idea* of Liberty, but a *Consciousness*, that they themselves are possess'd of it, if they be not free? An *inward Sense* of such an *inbred Principle* is what our Creator has deeply imprinted upon the Minds of all. Now this (as one observes) must be "either to *no Purpose*; or be design'd as an Act of Vexation and an Instrument of Torment to *evil Purpose*: (whilst Conscience is irresistibly determined to sting us for not being better than we were really *capable* of being; and while every one is led to blame and afflict his Neighbour for what he cou'd never hinder) or else it must be intended to persuade us of a Power we *actually have*, and so to be the Means of a Reward, and the Way to Felicity by the Advantage of a *free* and wise Choice: And this is to *very good Purpose*."

4thly, If there was *no Liberty* in the accountable Creature, there wou'd be nothing *contingent* in it, but all things wou'd be *necessary*; and so wou'd necessarily bear upon them the Characters and Marks of the infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of the first Mover. And we having *no Liberty* at all, cou'd never be at Liberty to act otherwise, but shou'd be under a *Necessity* to continue moving rightly and wisely to Eternity. Nothing cou'd be *wrong* or *foolish*, but wou'd in every Circumstance and Degree, be as perfect and as good as it *shou'd be*, and as it was *possible to be*. And so to lie wou'd be as praise-worthy as to *speak the Truth*, and to *kill an innocent Person* as worthy an Action as to *save his Life*.

5thly, Most Men, I think, will grant *Liberty* of Will in Actions of *natural Life* and *common Intercourse*, tho' some do deny it in *moral Actions*, or at least in *Actions spiritual*. But those seem to forget, that "the *only End of Liberty* (as Dr. Taylor takes Notice) is to make us *capable of Laws*, of *Virtue* and *Rewards*, and to distinguish us from Brutes, by a *distinct Manner* of Approach unto God, and a Way of Conformity unto him *proper to us*. And except in the Matter of Divine and Humane Laws, except in the Matter of Virtue and Vice, except in order to Reward or Punishment, Liberty and Choice were good for nothing. For to keep our selves from Harm or Poison, and

" Enemies;

“ Enemies ; a natural Instinct, and lower Appetites; and
 “ more brutish Faculties wou’d serve our Turn. And
 “ therefore to allow it where it is good for nothing, and
 “ to deny it, where only it can be useful and seasonable,
 “ and fit to be done, and given by the wise Father of all
 “ his Creatures, must needs be amiss,” Let this suffice at
 present to shew the *Necessity of Free-Agency in accountable*
Creatures, from,

Sir, Yours, &c.

A Fourth LETTER to Mr. ELIOT.

S I R,

THE Business of my two last, was to state and establish that first Principle of all Morality, the *Free-Agency* of accountable Creatures. There are several *Objections* which seem to militate against it : But before we consider them, it mayn’t be improper to say something first to the following *Question*.

Question II. Whether all the Actions of an accountable Creature are equally free ?

In Answer to which Enquiry you are desired to observe; 1st, That we allow with the Calvinists, “ that in many Cases rational Creatures are, (or, at least, may be) predetermined to do what they do.” We’ll grant them, that “ God hath a thousand Ways of moving Creatures, by suggesting Things to them, restraining Thoughts from them, diverting them; or animating them ;” and so of rendring their Actions in such and such Instances fixed or certain. What we ourselves can do, by a voluntary and free Application of the Mind to proper Evidence, God can much more do, by the Irradiations or Breakings in of over-powering Light. Thus Paul, in the very Heat of his blind and persecuting Zeal, was stop’d by a Light and Voice from Heaven. And thus *The King’s Heart is in the Hand of the Lord, as the Rivers of Water : He turneth it whithersoever he will.* But whether

ther this can be done "in a perfect Consistency with the utmost Freedom" of the Creature, as to such Changes, is another Question. Therefore, when the *Author* of the *Essay on the Freedom of the Will*, puts the Case, "Suppose God decree and determine to convert such a Sinner as *Onesimus* to Faith and Holiness:" Tho' we say with him, that God "can represent to *Onesimus's* Understanding, by his own Word, and by the additional Operation of his own Spirit, the Fitness and Goodness of Faith in *Christ*, and true Repentance, in such a superior Light, as he, who knows the Hearts and Sentiments, and Situation of all Men, doth certainly foreknow will be not only sufficient, but effectual to influence the Will of *Onesimus* to comply with it;" p. 63. Yet we must beg Leave to add, That the same Influence as makes it certain he will comply, leaves it impossible he shou'd not comply; unless it be possible for *Onesimus* to make what is certainly true, to be certainly false. But indeed, in such a Case, we are rather acted than acting; it is rather an Act of God upon the Will, than a free Act of the Will: Or, at least, it is no accountable Action; we being no more accountable for any Change wrought in us by the Act of another, which we could never hinder, and which we did not freely chuse, than we are for our own Existence. Accountableness comes in, where the Irresistibleness of Divine Influences ceaseth; or where we have a Dominion over our own Actions; i. e. where it was in our Power to have prevented the Application, or to have resisted the Operation of such superior Light. And does not the abovementioned *Author* grant as much, when he tells us, "Thus the virtuous and pious Actions of Men are praised worthy and rewardable, — because the Will had a natural Self-determining Power to chuse the contrary," p. 64: But how to reconcile this with what immediately follows; I know not. "And yet, says he, these good Actions may be effectually secured, as to their Performance, by such a powerful Representation of Divine Things to the Understanding, as God foreknows will certainly; tho' not necessarily, be an Occasion of the final Determination of the Will to Piety and Virtue." For since all are agreed, That what God foreknows will certainly be, is certain; a Power to chuse the contrary, must be a Power to prevent what's certain; or, in *Mr. M.'s* Phrase, a Power to make an im-

mutable Truth, false, and an immutable Falshood, true. "If what is certain, may be prevented; then what is certain, may deceive us: And so there can be no sure Dependance upon any Thing. Don't they (in effect) strike at all Religion at once, whether revealed or natural, and let in a Flood of Scepticism upon us, when they contend, That what is certain, may never be?"

2dly, Our Opponents allow with us, that "what is done freely, might not have been done, because Freedom implies a Power to do, or not." And as they own, that rational Creatures are in many Cases "so free, as to be accountable for their own Actions;" so that they are in such Cases "left to their free Choice to *act* or *not*, *thus* or *thus*, *this* or *that*." Vid. Mr. M.'s Second Preface, p. 6. and his Treatise of *Future Contingencies*, p. 139. Nay, both Sides are pretty well agreed, (the most rigid of the *Predestinarians* only excepted) That this is the *ordinary* State of Things in the Matters of our Salvation: So that tho' it be the *Light* that quickens, the *Truth* that sanctifies, as under a Divine Benediction and Influence; yet to come to this quickening Light, to apply this sanctifying Truth, is our Part, and must be our free *Act*, as far, at least, as we are accountable for the Performance or Non-performance of them. Yet,

3dly, When it is said, that Man must be free, with a Freedom of Indifference, to make him an accountable Creature, neither Side supposes, That it is necessary our Dispositions or Inclinations be in an equal Degree of Indifference, or in a perfect *Equilibrio*, as to either Side; tending (even in our fall'n State) no more to one Extreme than another. It is enough that we be not absolutely staked down to one Side; tho' we must fight and run, and endure in both, wou'd we turn the Balance for Holiness and a blessed Immortality. But,

4thly, What we differ in, is this; They say, "Tho' the Will is left to its own Free-Agency, and Self-determining Power; yet the Light in which God sets the Gospel before the Eyes of the Mind is so great, as will finally and certainly persuade the Will." Vid. the Author of the *Essay*, &c. p. 63. — Whereas we say, That the Decree it self "cannot undertake, that the Creature shall do that, which after all must be left intirely to the Liberty of the Creature, whether it shall be done, or no." The Decree may ascertain the

the *Event* indeed, but not the *Freedom* of it; that it *shall* be done, but not that it *shall* be done *freely*: Which yet is what they contend for. "God may decree, says Mr. M. that some *Events shall* come to pass, not *necessarily*, but *contingently* or *freely*." See his *Future Contingencies*, p. 135. We'll grant them, God may decree that an *Action shall* come to pass, either *contingently* or *necessarily*; either by the *Creature's free Chace*, or by his own *over bearing Influence*: But then the *Existence* of the *Action* is *all* that the *Decree* makes *certain*, not the *Manner* of its *Existence*. It is now *certain*, it *shall* exist, either *one Way* or the *other*; but not, that it *shall* exist by the *Creature's free Choice*. True; such *Action may*, notwithstanding, be *eventually* what we *freely* chuse; (because the *Decree* is supposed to go no farther than to secure God's kind *Interpositions* to bring the *Evidence* and our *Faculties* EFFECTUALLY together, if *NEEDFUL*) yet, WE say, it is not therefore *certain* it will be so, [*viz.* what we *shall* *freely* chuse] till we have *determin'd* our own *Liberty*, and so have done something ourselves to *make* it *certain*; *i. e.* an *Action* can't be *certain*, and yet *contingent* or *free*, at the same time. But this THEY *affirm*; and say, That it may be both true, that an *Action will* be; and yet true, that it *may never* be. This is what Mr. M. intends by the *Title* of his Book, *viz.* *All future free Actions, future Contingencies*. And what Mr. Norman means, when he asketh, "What *Appearance* of a *Contradiction* is there in supposing, that something might be — *certain*, and yet at the same time *contingent*?" *Vid.* his *Appendix* to Mr. F. p. 12. —Whereas the *Appearance* of a *Contradiction* is so great, that some have drawn the *eternal Certainty* of our *Actions* into a *strong Objection* against the *Freedom* of them. Thus;

Objection 1st. All our *accountable Actions*, say some, were ever *certain*; but what was ever *certain*, was never *free*.

There are but *two Ways* of answering this *Objection*; either by shewing that an *Action* may be *certain*, and yet *free*: Or, by shewing, that our *free Actions* are only *possible*, till we ourselves have made them *certain*. The former, I know, is the more *usual Answer*; but the latter I take to be the more *solid*. And that this may the better appear, let the next *Question* be,

Question III. Whether the same Action may be CERTAIN, and yet FREE, at the same time? This THEY affirm, and we deny.

The Freedom we are disputing about, is opposed to all Necessity, be it outward or inward: But now, what is certain, is necessary. This has, I conceive, been demonstrated already in my Reply to your Elucidation. Nay, Mr. F's Opponents, whether Decretalists, or Anti-decretalists, do at times allow it. Mr. Millar, who is of the former Class, makes the Difference between necessary and certain to be rather verbal than real. "The last Word, 'tis true, says he, is softer than the other; but it is very clear, that most, if not all the Conclusions, which follow from the One, will follow from the Other." *Vid. his first Preface, p. 14.* Mr. Bliss, who is of the other Class, tells us, "On Supposition that Sin will be" [or that Sin is certain] — it must be, it cannot but be." *p. 69.* Now, what is necessary, if that which must be so, and can't be otherwise, be not? So, in Answer to them who argue, That what depends on the Will of a free Agent, may be certain, tho' not necessary; "To me, says Dr. Waterland, the Difficulty stands just where it did. For how is that certain, which is not necessary, which may or may not be? Which is all the Meaning of not necessary; and which, says he, amounts to the same as not certain, in the present Case. And how is that fixed or certain, which is yet floating and hanging in Suspence, either may or may not be?" *Vid. his further Vindication, &c. p. 91.*

A Power that can't be exerted, without making a Contradiction true, is no Power; or is a Power to do Impossibilities. But a Power to prevent what's certain (which they suppose every free Agent to have) is a Power to make what's certain, not certain. Now for a Thing to be certain, and not certain, is a flat Contradiction.—Those that pretend to such a Power, let them actually prevent what's certain, and we'll believe they can. Or let them shew, it has been done, or that it will be done, or how it may be done; or assign any valuable Reasons, why such a Power shou'd be communicated to Man; and it is enough. But till then, what End the Belief of such a Power can serve, I can't imagine; "unless (as Mr. F. phrases it) it be to make the Head giddy with gazing upon the airy Phantom, or the Body lean with wondring at it." *Vid. his*

his *Appendix* to Mr. Norman, p. 7, 10. where he has in Mood and Figure demonstrated, that what will be, must be, and therefore is not contingent.

Mr. Millar, I know, makes himself merry here, and charges the Form of some of those Syllogisms with egregious Blunders. But your better Judgment will soon discern, that the Mistake lies wholly at his own Door. What he calls the Major of an hypothetical Syllogism, is but a Part of the Major, viz. that Part which Logicians call the *Antecedent*. (Vid. *Ars Sciendi, sive Logica*, p. 148) Now, where's the Mistake to call an *Antecedent*, an *Antecedent*? And, as Mr. F. affirms the Connection between the *Antecedent* and the *Consequent*, he, according to Rule, assumes the *Antecedent* in the Minor Proposition, and proves that; and therefore rightly concludes, [to prevent what will be, is a Contradiction.] So that, to retort his high-flown Compliment, Mr. F. might more justly say, [*mutatis mutandis*] "Fie! fie! that Mr. M. shou'd pretend to censure a Demonstration, before he can understand one. This is the more unpardonable, because it was not less than two Years, before he publish'd his Remarks upon it. Strange! that no Body was so kind, as to bid him correct such Blunders, of which a Boy learning Logic (and much more one that subscribes himself, *Master of Arts*) wou'd have been ashamed." Vid. his 3d Book, p. 103. —

But this I submit to the Learned, and beg the Excuse of the common Reader. A Defence of that Demonstration was the more expedient here; because if it stands, their Cause must fall, who assert the eternal Certainty of our freest Actions, or such a Prescience of them, as implies such a Certainty. I am,

Jan. 9, 1732-3.

S I R, Yours, &c.

A Fifth Letter to Mr. ELIOT.

S I R,

Jan. 11. 1732-3.

WE are now upon the *Objections* that militate against *Free-Agency*. In my last I observ'd, That some argue from the *eternal Certainty* of our accountable *Actions* against the *Freedom* of them. And we must, I think, either deny they were ever certain, or acknowledge they were never free. They who plead for the *eternal Certainty* of our free *Actions*, argue thus;

1st. Since it is in fact true, that such and such *Actions* have been, it must have been ever true, that they not only might be, but would be.

If a Thing now is, says the nameless Author, let it be necessary or contingent, or what you please, it is a Truth that it now is: Therefore — it was from Eternity true that it would now be," p. 71. — "Mr. F. will not allow, says Mr. Norman, that such Contingencies, that the Dispute is about, would be, tho' in Fact they have been." Appendix, p. 9. — We may, says Mr. Bliss, truly say, every Thing that at any Time has been — was from Eternity future," p. 12. — "All Things, Events, Actions, Matters of Fact, that at any Time have been, or now are, — were, says Mr. Millar, future from the Beginning; i. e. it was true, [meaning from Eternity] that they would be, in their proper Time, just as they have been, or are, &c." Vid. *All future free Actions, future Contingencies*, p. 49. — And this is what you yourself contend for, when you affirm, That whatever is now certain, was ever certain," Vid. *The Grub-street Journal*, No. 137. Had you here only said, [was ever possible,] the Conclusion had been just, had been every Way consistent with the Freedom of our Actions, and had met with no Opposition. But to infer their eternal Certainty from their present or past Existence only, is, as I take it, a fundamental Error in the Controversy before us; and must unavoidably run you upon the Absurdity of an eternal Necessity of what you call contingent Events. And I wonder

wonder that Gentlemen of *Learning* and *Penetration* cannot see it : Nay, at Times, you all seem clearly to perceive it ; and, which is more, seem impatient to prove it too. Thus, says the *nameless Author*, " If this Proposition be true, I write to Day, though my writing to Day be ever so *contingent* a Thing, this Proposition I will write to *Morrow*, was likewise true or certain *Yesterday* ; as certain as if I had been *Yesterday* under the most *fatal* Necessity of writing to Day ; Because, says he, it is impossible for me to write and not to write, at the same Time," p. 72. Here he makes that to be *contingent*, which, by his own Confession, was *impossible* to be otherwise. Thus, Mr. Norman demands of Mr. F. " And I ask you, Sir, whether you cannot conceive that an Event (let *Adam's Sin* be the Instance) might be certain, as view'd by the Divine Mind, and yet, considered as depending upon the Will and Determination of a Creature acting *freely, contingent* ?" p. 30. But how shou'd Mr. F. conceive it to be a *contingent* Event ? Since, by Mr. N's own Acknowledgment, what is thus view'd by the Divine Mind, *must infallibly be*, p. 33. Thus, Mr. Millar having first supposed, that our *free* Actions were ever certain, he tells you they were ever *inevitable* also ; and that to have acted otherwise, would have been to have made " an *immutable Truth, false* ; i. e. says he, to have done *Impossibilities*, to have wrought *Contradictions*, to have done that which cannot possibly be done, Vid. *All future free Actions, future Contingencies*," p. 50. Thus, the *Author* of the *Abstract*, speaking of our *free* Actions, slides insensibly from the *Certainty* to the *Necessity* of them. " Will there not yet, says he, be, in the Nature of Things, the same *Certainty* of Event, in any one of the Man's Actions, as if they were never so *fatal* and *necessary* ? Vid. *The Grub street Journal*, No. 134.

Now, what is this, more or less, than to say, That every Action that ever has been done, was *necessary* as well as *certain*, before it was done ; and therefore was never *contingent*, or really *free* ? And yet, at other times, Mr. Millar, in the Name of the rest, tells us, " Every Man that acts *freely*, knows he may act, or not ; and there is no Disputing against *common Sense*. The Conscience of every Sinner, he goes on, even the *wickedest Wretch* upon Earth, witnesseth, that there is not *any Sin*, which is *inevitably*

tably committed by him, but that he hath P O W E R
E N O U G H to abstain from it," p. 114. What, Power
enough to do *Impossibilities*! to work *Contradictions*! to
do what cannot possibly be done! viz. to make an *eternal*
and *immutable Truth*, false! But Error is Downhill: And
such are the Absurdities, that follow from admitting the
eternal Certainty of *contingent*, or *free Events*! Now,
when a Man, in his Searches into the Nature of Things,
finds his Enquiries thus leading him towards such No-
tions, as, if they should prove true, would manifestly sub-
vert the very *Essences* of *Good* and *Evil*; the least that a
sober-minded Man can in such a Case be supposed to owe
to God, to *Virtue*, to the *Dignity* of the rational Nature,
is, " That he ought (as Dr. Clarke well expresses it) to be
in the highest Degree fearful and suspicious of himself, lest
he be led away by any *Prejudice*, lest he be deceived by
any *erroneous Argument*, lest he suffer himself to be im-
posed upon by any *wrong Inclination*." Vid. Mr. F's *Essay*,
p. 5.

Let us therefore inquire into the Springs of this strange
Mistake, That what is now certain, was not only ever possible,
but ever certain also. First, Is it, because it is now certain?
But this goes upon a false Principle, viz. That every Thing
EVER WAS, what it NOW IS: which is manifestly absurd;
and would, if pursued, prove, That what is now past, was
ever past; that what doth now exist, did ever exist; that
what is now necessary (which yet is true of the most *contingent*
Events, when *actually existing*.) was ever necessary.
And thus, upon the same Foot of Reasoning every Thing in
this temporary and mutable World would be *eternal* and
immutable: And so, he that is drunk to Day, must have
been an *eternal Drunkard*. — Or, 2dly, Must that which is
now certain, have been ever certain; because, otherwise, some
Truths will depend upon *Will* and *Pleasure*? Which, accord-
ing to Mr. F's Opponents, are all equally *eternal*, *independent*
and *immutable*. Therefore, when Mr. F. had observed, That
the *eternal Decree* of God is the true Reason, why any Events
were *eternally future*, or what ever would be; the nameless Au-
thor denies it; and this, not only with Respect to *abstracted*,
metaphysical, or *mathematical Truths*, [such as these,
It is impossible for the same Thing to be, and not to be, at the
same Time; Or, What 2. is to 4. that 4. is to 8, and 8 unto

is, &c.] but also in Regard to *particular Truths*, [such as these, *I am, Sin is, &c.*] "The Will of God, says he, is indeed, the proper Cause of my Being; I depend upon his Will and Pleasure for my Existence; so that I could not have been, if he had not *willed* me to be: But this Truth, *I now am*, is not (adds that *Author*) the *Effect* of the Divine Will; otherwise, if God had not *will'd* this to be true, it *wou'd not* have been true, That *I am, when I am.*" p. 42. He shou'd only have said, It *wou'd not* have been true, that *I am*: And then the Consequence is what we allow, and thus defend. If this Truth, That *I now am*, was not the *Effect* of the Divine Will, i. e. if it did not depend upon his *willing* me to be; then, tho' he had *never willed* my Existence, and I had *never been*, yet it wou'd have been a Truth notwithstanding, That *I now am*. So that the *Sophistry* is obvious, and lies here; God cant', it is true, by his *effective Will* give me a Being; and yet at the same time make it a Truth, that I have *no Being*; no more than he can by his Will make me to be and *not to be*, at the same time. What then? Yet he that by his *effective Will* makes me to be, makes it a Truth, that *I now am*; as he cou'd by *suspending* that *Act* of his Will, have *prevented* my Being, and so have *prevented* its being now true, that *I am*; and in as much as by a *contrary Act* of his Will he cou'd make me to *cease* to be, and so make it *cease* to be any longer true, that *I am*.— 3dly, Do they argue thus? What is now certain, must be ever certain; since, with Respect to any present Action, it must have been either *ever certain* that it wou'd be, or *ever certain* that it wou'd not be: But the Event, they'll say, *disproves* the latter; therefore the former was true. Thus Mr. Blis produces the Authorities of Chrysippus and Cicero to shew this, viz. That every Proposition must be true or false from Eternity, in Opposition to Epicurus, who held, That some Propositions were *neither true, nor false*, from Eternity, but were left to the Determination of the free Agent to make either so; because he thought the opposite Notion was absolutely *inconsistent* with the Liberty of the Will. "For, says Epicurus, if either Side of a Proposition, the *Affirmative* or *Negative*, was true from Eternity, it must have been certain; and if certain, then necessary; and so Fate and Necessity wou'd be established." Vid. Mr. Blis's *Vindication*, Sect. 7. And does not Cicero,

in Effect, allow the same? When he says, ; " This Proposition was ever true, *Philoctetes* will be left in the Island, *Lemnos* ; nor cou'd this Truth have been changed into a Falshood." Now, what is necessary, if that be not, which cou'd never have been otherwise? So that you see, Sir, that *Cicero* himself is something of an *Epicurean* here. " But then it is only in a Point, wherein one may be so with Honour," as *Father Regnault* expresses it. And I may defy all the World to evade the Charge of an absolute *Fatality* in all our *Thoughts*, *Volitions*, and *Actions*, without admitting *Epicurus's* Distinction to be just. And therefore with due Deference to that great Man, *Cicero*, the Sophistry, I humbly conceive, is on his own Side, and lies here ; in not distinguishing (as I hinted in my first Letter to yourself) between contrary and contradictory Propositions. Contrary Propositions can't be both true, but they may be both false. Whereas contradictory Propositions can neither be both true, nor be both false. [The Romans have conquered all Nations ; The Romans have conquered no Nations ;] These are contrary Propositions. They can't be both true, but they may be both false. But when we say, [The Romans have conquered all Nations ; The Romans have not conquered all Nations ;] These are contradictory Propositions. And as they can't be both true, so one of them must be true. Every Proposition, indeed, must be ever true, or not ever true : But then some Propositions, that were not ever true, may be now true. Such as relate to the Existence of contingent Events, and whose Truth therefore depends upon the free Act of the future Creature, were neither true nor false from Eternity ; but were, BEFORE ALL WORLDS, only possible to be either true, or false, according as the free Creature shou'd IN TIME determine. What natural Philosophers observe concerning Matter, " That neither Motion nor Rest (not one of them particularly) is essential to it, i.e. it will be still Matter, in which soever of those States it be ; it being indifferent to both, or equally susceptible of either : " (Vid. *Father Regnault's PHILOSOPHICAL CONVERSATIONS*, translated by Dale, Vol. I. p. 91. Margin) will serve to illustrate the Point before us. Thus, our accountable Actions, whilst in a State of Freedom, are in a State of Possibility only. Neither Existence nor Non-existence, with respect to any

Point

Point of future Duration, (not one of them particularly) is essential to them; they being as yet indifferent to both, or equally susceptible of either. I am,

Sir,

Yours, &c.

A Sixth Letter to Mr. ELIOT.

S I R,

YOU will not be offended, that I continue to superscribe my Letters to yourself, when I assure you, it is wholly owing to that good Judgment and great Ingenuity I apprehend to be in You. Shou'd there, at any Time, be a Fallacy in my Way of Reasoning, as your Penetration will not fail to discover it, so your Candour will dispose you to point it out, not like an insulting Foe, but like a Friend, and a Gentleman. — You was too sagacious not to perceive the Absurdity, of contending for a certain Foreknowledge of an uncertain Thing; and therefore to secure your Point, you endeavoured to demonstrate, that our free Actions were ever certain, as well as ever fore-known. The Medium you chose to argue from, was, That what is now certain, was ever certain. This I take to be a false Principle, and a fundamental Error in the Controversy before us. We are now considering the chief Arguments that are usually brought to support it; and by which some Men of Learning, and even zealous Advocates for the Freedom of our Actions, have been induced to believe their eternal Certainty, as well as Possibility. In my last I have, I think, sufficiently exposed the Invalidity and Weakness of three of them. Let us now proceed to the rest.

4thly, Some have been led into this Mistake from an Opinion, that the same Arguments which are brought to prove, That our free Actions cou'd not be ever certain, will equally prove that they were never certain, till they actually came to pass; which yet, say they, is a Pitch higher than Mr. F. will care to go. — “The Truth is, says Mr.

“ *Bliss*, this Way of Reasoning of Mr. F. if just, wou’d con-
 “ clude not only against any particular Sin’s being *eternally*
 “ *future*, but also against its having any Futurition at all, or
 “ so much as a single Moment’s Futurition” p. 12, 13.
 — Here, if Mr. B. speaks (as he *seems* and ought to do) of those Sins only, of which there is no sufficient Cause, antecedent to their Existence, ascertaining their future Existence, or determining that they shall be; we own the Consequence. But this, he’ll tell you, is the Case of Sin in general, “ which, properly speaking, lies not in the *material* Act, but in the *criminal Volitions* of the Sinner’s Mind,” p. 13. But here a Question will arise, Whether *no Volitions* of the Sinner’s Mind ought to be call’d *criminal*, but what were, the VERY MOMENT BEFORE, *contingent*, or what *might never have been*? Are all Volitions, to the very last, *equally free*? Mayn’t a prior Abuse of our Liberty enslave the Faculty in some Instances? And yet mayn’t such consequent Volitions, tho’ now necessary, be denominated *criminal*, because free with respect to their original Cause? — Mr. B. pleads for a Stoical Fate and Liberty. Now Tacitus, as he himself observes, represents such a Sort of Necessity as this I’ve mentioned, as the general Opinion of the Stoics. “ They think indeed, a Fatality may belong “ to Things; not as if it proceeded from the Planets, but “ from the Principles and Connections of natural Causes: “ And yet they leave it to our own Choice to live as we “ please;” (now mind what follows,) “ but when we have “ chosen, a certain Order of Consequences will ensue,” p. 20. Margin. Now, mayn’t some irregular Volitions of the Will be some of those Consequences, that will now ensue? And mayn’t they be stiled *criminal*, with regard to the criminal Choice from whence they originally ensued? Thus, the imperate Acts of the executive Powers, tho’ in themselves not immediately free, are denominated good or bad, on account of those elicit Acts of the Will, or free Volitions of the Mind that direct and govern them. Hence the Wicked are called, in Sacred Writ, not only Willers, but Workers of Iniquity.

I see no reason to hold, that our free Actions must be either *eternally certain*, or else altogether *uncertain*, until the very Moment of Action. When Mr. F.’s Opponents argue, “ God foresees that Things certainly will be (though
 “ they

“ they are *contingent* and *may not* be,) by foreseeing the “ *Causes* which will *certainly* produce them ;” (Vid. Mr. Norman’s Letter, p. 30.) as here they plainly allow, there was a Time *before* their Existence, when it was *certainly true*, that they *would* exist ; so also, that the *Futurition* of their Existence is to be dated from that Time, or from the *Determination* of such Cause or Causes, which *will* (sooner or later) *certainly* produce them. If the Cause or Causes be the *Will* or *Purpose* of the *Creature*, then the *Truth* or *Certainty* of their *future* Existence *begins* with such *Will* or *Purpose* ; and the Events themselves are stiled *contingent* ; with respect to the *State* they were in, *before* the *actual* or *virtual* Determination of such Causes : But if the Cause or Causes be *in God*, in his *eternal* and *unchangeable* Decrees ; then the *Certainty* of their *future* Existence *commences* (if I may so express it) with such Decrees. ——— This I take, however, to be very clear ; when once an Action becomes *certain*, from that Moment it ceases to be any longer *free*, *i. e.* to be of the Class of such Actions, as upon the whole either *may* or *may not* be ; and it is denominated a *free Action*, only because there *was once* a Time, when it *might* or *might not* have been, and not because it *is still* true, that it *may* or *may not* be.

In the Passage just cited out of Mr. N.’s Letter (which are the Words of Dr. Jackson, in his *Defence of human Liberty*, p. 55.) he says, “ God foresees that Things *certainly* will “ be,—by foreseeing the *Causes* that will *certainly* produce “ them.” Now what is this but to say, God sees the *Truth* of their *future* Existence, in the *Causes* of it ? And yet Mr. B. seems to be very much offended, that Mr. F. should talk of the *Causes* of Truth, and “ not be satisfy’d with *Reasons* “ and *Arguments*, why *this* or *that* will be true,” (or rather, *is* true,) p. 24. — Mr. F. is there speaking of such Truths, as were not in their *own Nature* true, or *necessarily* so ; but are, by some Act of God or the *Creature*, made to be what they are. Now if such or such an Act of the *Creature’s* or *Creator’s Will* be the *Reason*, why that is *true to Day*, which was not true *before*, the *Truth* of such a Proposition he makes to *depend* upon that Act, as the *Origin* and *Principle* of its being what it is. The *One* he calls the *Cause*, the *other*, the *Effect* ; because in an *analogical* Sense, at least, they appear to be so, which is enough to justify the Use of the

the Terms.—But what does Mr. B. mean by an *Argument*, why *this* or *that* is true? As if they were speaking only of the *Reason*, why any Thing is *known* to be true, and not why it *is* so. The Testimony of *Sacred Writ*, is the Ground of my *Knowledge*, indeed, of *Adam's Fall*, or is an *Argument* why I *believe*, that *Adam fell*; but not the *Reason* why he *did* fall. — Mr. B. goes on, “Every one knows, that a Truth, *as such*, is a mere abstract Thing, without any real *Subsistence*; so that, says he, ‘tis an Impossibility in Nature, that it should be really caused, which is the same as to be brought really into Being,” p. 24. But he forgets that every one knows, that knows enough to judge in this Matter, that Nothing really *subsists* but *Substances*, and that *Modes* only *in-exist*; and yet that every *Mode* is not an abstract Thing. An abstract Thing is only an abstract *Idea*, which by his own Confession “has no Existence at all but in the Mind” p. 7. But are the *Modes* of *Substances* Nothing but what they are in the Mind of him that thinks of them? Are the various *Figures* of *Bodies*, for Instance, nothing but our *Idea* of them? If so; then what he calls “the Quintessence of what *Protagoras*, *Leucippus*, *Democritus*, and others of the Atomical Atheists maintain’d, will fall to his own Lot at last.” For then, even according to Mr. Blips, “Nothing will be absolutely true in itself; Truths will be real *Effects*; that is to say, *Sensations* produced in the Mind by external Causes.” As to what he adds, “Mr. F. indeed does not say, that Truths are *Sensations* of the Mind; yet his Words seem to imply as much,” p. 25. the best on’t is, they do but *seem* to imply it; whereas his own Words do *really* imply thus much. I durst vouch for Mr. F. it never entered into his Thoughts to make real Truths to *come* and *go*, with his or any other Man’s *Sensation*. Our *Perception* of Truth he calls indeed a *Representation* of the Object; but the Truth of a Proposition perceived (for Instance, That the whole is equal to all the Parts united;) he’ll allow to be the same, and to abide, whether it be perceived, or no: Only he says also, That this Proposition, *Sin shall or will be*, which his Opponents consider as an eternal Truth, “must be a Truth that is either necessary in its own Nature, or produced and made so,” (*viz.* to be a Truth) “by the Divine Will.”

"*Will*. For the *Creature* which yet *never was*, can't be the "*Cause* of a *Truth* that *ever was*," *Essay* p. 108. But here Mr. B complains of a *Sophism* in Mr. F's Argument, as if there was an *imperfect Enumeration*. As to which Particular, I must beg Leave to differ from him. When Mr. B. says, "The *Truth* is, *Fore knowledge* in the *Order* of "our *Ideas* should be considered as subsequent to the "*Truth* and *Reality* of the *Event*, which is the *Object* of "it", p. 65. does he not speak of the *Truth* of the *Event* as something *real*? Now every *Thing* that's *real*, is either *produced*, or *not produced*; but what is *not produced*, is in its own *Nature necessary*. Therefore every *real Thing* is either *produced*, or its own *Nature necessary*; and consequently the *Enumeration* is *complete* and *perfect*. So that I must confess, (since Mr. B. chutes the Phrase) "I think Mr. F. has "them under a *Dilemma* here, as safe and secure as betwween two *Millstones*?" And that their *Hypotheses* [either of *future Contingencies*, i. e. of *Events* that *will be*, and yet *may never be*; Or, of an *eternal Fore knowledge* not founded upon a *Decree*;) must be ground between them, as small as *Dust*. For then it will follow, that this Proposition, *Sin will be*, (which they consider as an *eternal Truth*, or a *Truth* before all *Worlds*) must be a *Truth* either *necessary* in its own *Nature*, (and then what becomes of *Sin's Contingency*, or of Mr. B's following Concession? "'Tis granted, says he, the Proposition Mr. F mentions is not a "*Truth necessary* in its own *Nature*, *absolutely* considered,") or it must be *produced* and made so by the *Divine Will*; since the *Creature* is *Nothing* before all *Worlds*, but what it is in the *Divine Purpose*: (and then what becomes of their *absolute*, particular, *eternal Fore-knowledge* of all *Events*, without founding it on an *absolute Decree*?)

And, tho' this *Dilemma* has not had altogether that Effect upon this *Reverend Divine*, as might have been expected; yet it seems to have put him into a great *Perplexity*, and to have occasioned all that *Obscurity* he shelters himself under in the 68th Page. Where he speaks of *Contingencies* (for about them is the Dispute) that "they may "be — necessarily true in the *Hypothetical Sense* of *Necessity*", tho', by his own Confession, "'tis plain enough, "that whatever was always necessary in this *Sense*, it "could not but be always true, that it *would come to pass*".

p. 68. But if it *cou'd not* be otherwise, why does he make such an Action *contingent*, or to "depend upon the free Choice of the Creature for its Existence, and to be what the Creature *may* or *may not* do, as he thinks fit" ? p. 77. Or, how can he say "that Sin is a *contingent* Event, what *may never* be and yet *will* be ; and yet affirm, that on Supposition Sin *will* be, — it *must* be, and *cannot but* be ? p. 69. Such Passages, I say too, "are utterly unintelligible ; and "are no more calculated to convey clear Ideas to the "Reader's Mind, than if they were express'd in the *Coprick* "or *Sclavonian* Tongue." Or, so far as they are intelligible, they are a plain Contradiction to me ; and his "Argument, as he phrases it, is *Felo de se*, and destroys it self." Whereas what he censures as such in Mr. F's *Essay*, has no Foundation, but in his own Mistake. For where does he talk of a Production *strictly* eternal ? He only says, "This Proposition, [*Sin shall be*, or *Sin will be* ;] considered as an *eternal Truth*" (*i. e.* which his Opponents consider as true before the Creature had a Being ; which is the general Signification of the Term, [*eternal*] in Scripture, and is the Sense the Context explains it in) must be either the *one* or the *other*, "must be a Truth that is "either *necessary* in its own Nature, or *produced* and made "so." Here is nothing of any one of them *alone* being *eternal*, much less *strictly eternal*.

But these Phrases, [*Causes of Truth*] or [*Truths being produced*] Mr. B. can by no Means digest ; and therefore complains again, of the Absurdity of this Language ; and says, "that a Truth, *as such*, is — incapable of having any "Cause, or of being produced either by God's or the "Creature's Will," p. 69, 70. But to this I have reply'd already ; and further add, If *Crouza's* Account of Truth, mention'd by himself, be just, *viz.* "When Things are really "such as we conceive them, we are said to think right ; "and *Truth* consists in that Relation of our Thoughts with "those Things which we believe we know ;" then, as we are the *Cause* of our own Thoughts, must we not be also the *Cause* of that Relation between our Thoughts and the Things thought on ? and by Consequence, the *Cause* of those *Truths* which, according to him, consist in that Relation of our Thoughts with those Things, which we believe we know ? — Tho' with due Deference to that great
Man,

Man, I should chuse rather to say, That a Thing must be true, before it can be known to be so; or that the *objective* Truth, or the Truth of the *Object*, must be *antecedent*, at least in Nature, to that which is *Subjective*, which is only some intelligent Being's *Perception* of it. Dr. Clarke, I find is of the same Mind; as when he says, "God's certain Fore-knowledge of free Events," (or Contingencies) *viz.* "That they will be, arises from and depends upon the Futurity of the Things known." To the same Purpose are the Words of *Origin*, *St. Jerom*, and *St. Chrysostom*, quoted by Mr. B. himself. "A Thing, says *Origen*, — "was foreknown, because it was future, and would come to pass." "Because it will be, says *St. Jerom*, therefore God knows it." "Because Offences would come, says *St. Chrysostom*, therefore God foretold them." Nay, Mr. B. takes Notice, that "this Solution of the Case is so fair and clear, that Mr. *Hobbs* himself submitted to it. "Fore-knowledge is Knowledge, says Mr. *Hobbs*, and Knowledge depends on the Existence of the Things known, "and not they on it," p. 65, 66. But then will it not as fairly and as clearly follow, That if our free Actions, whilst free, are not future but only possible, the Ground of their being fore-known as future is gone, and the Fore-knowledge with it?

Indeed the nameless Author differs from the abovemention'd Authorities in this: And therefore when Mr. F. took it for granted, "That the Thing fore-known is that; "on which God's Fore-knowledge is grounded;" he tells him, "It is absolutely false." But is it ever the false, merely, because our Author says so? The Thing fore-known, he argues, may be the "Object of God's Fore-knowledge, "but not the Ground of it," p. 19. A little strange! For, Knowledge, by his own Confession, is the clear and certain Perception of Truth, and Truth is the adequate Object of Knowledge. Now what is or can be the real Reason or Ground of such Perception, if the Truth perceived be not? I take that to be the Ground of any Knowledge, upon which that Knowledge doth depend. But all Knowledge doth so depend upon Truth, the Object of it, that the Knowledge is not Knowledge, without Truth, the Object; tho' Truth, the Object, may be Truth without that Knowledge. My Meaning is this; tho' we cannot know where

where there is *nothing to be known* ; yet there may be *some Thing to be known*, whether we *know* it, or no. But he will tell us, Be this as it will in the *Creature*, it is otherwise in the *Creator* ; and “ the *Ground of God’s Fore-knowledge* “ is in *God himself*, and not in any *Thing* or *Object* “ *without him*.” But this Gentleman seems to forget, that we are here speaking of the *Fore-knowledge* which God had *before the World was made*, and therefore when there was no *Object without him* to be fore-known, and when by Consequence the *Object*, as well as *Ground of such Fore-knowledge*, must be either *within himself*, or *no where*. Thus, as nothing could be the *Object of God’s eternal Knowledge of all Possibilities*, but the *Divine Power*, the *Ground of this Knowledge* ; (the *Divine Power*, I say, which comprehends all that God can do himself, or by making a *free Creature*, can make it possible for his *Creature to do*) so as to *God’s eternal Fore-knowledge of all Futurities*, the *Divine Decree or Will*, will be found to be *Ground and Object both* ; and so the *Object and the Ground of such Fore-knowledge* may be still *within himself*. But to return from this *Digression*.

A Continuation of the sixth Letter to Mr. ELIOT.

5thly, A Mistaken Opinion, That the *Certainty of an Event* is very consistent with its *Liberty* and *Contingency*, tho’ the *Necessity of it* be not ; is another Source of this Error, viz. *What is now certain, was ever certain*. “ An ingenious Writer, says “ Mr. Norman, observes, That there is a Difference between the *Certainty of Event*, and *Necessity of Event*,” p. 30. yet not such a Difference but that *one Event* is as certain as the *other*, by Mr. N.’s own Confession. For he tells us in the same Paragraph, “ that God [who] sees “ Things no otherwise than in Truth they are, — knows “ both, (viz. *contingent and necessary Things*) with an “ equal Certainty” But now, if he knows both with an equal Certainty, and yet sees them no otherwise than in Truth they are, they must in themselves be equally certain.

tain. And then must it not be *equally impossible* to prevent either? Or, can Events which *may be prevented*, as *contingent Events may*, be *equally certain* with those that are *necessary*, and which *none can prevent*? Besides, tho' the *Causes* of two or more Events be never so *different*, the one a *free*, the other a *necessary Cause*; and tho' the Events themselves may be *differently denominated* in this respect; the one a *free*, the other a *necessary Event*: Yet as these *different Events*, when they exist, do not only *certainly*, but *necessarily* exist, (*i. e.* the *Certainty* and *Necessity* of their Existence, while they exist, are *equal* on both Sides;) so, that which *will certainly be*, is, for the same Reason, as *unavoidable*, as that which *will necessarily be*; since it can never be true of that which *will be*, that it *will not be*. The Events are *both necessary* now, tho' the *Causes* of this *Necessity* may be, in one Case, the *once free*, but now *unalterable RESOLUTION* of some sufficient *moral Agent*; in the other Case, the *never free*, but *irresistible ENERGY* or *FORCE* of, what some call, a *necessary or natural Agent*. And therefore, tho' "that Man understands very little (in Dr. Sherlock's Opinion) who knows not the Difference between the *Necessity* and the *Certainty* of an Event;" (Vid. Mr. N.'s Letter, p. 31.) Yet neither, I conceive, can he understand very much, who knows not, that, notwithstanding this Difference, an Event which *will certainly be*, is as *impossible to be prevented*, as an Event which *will necessarily be*. And that which is *impossible to be otherwise*, is now *necessary*, and no longer *free* or *contingent*. Mr. Millar, I know, will tell us, "God may decree, that some Events shall come to pass; — and yet may decree, that they shall come to pass, not necessarily, but contingently or freely." (Vid. his *Future Contingencies*, p. 135) *i. e.* What shall be, may never be; tho' God has decreed it shall be. Which is all one as to say, That God may decree Contradictions; that a Thing shall be both *contingent* and not *contingent*, *necessary* and not *necessary*. Whereas to decree that an Event shall be *contingent*, or *free*, is neither to decree that it shall be, nor to decree that it shall not be; but only to decree that it shall be left to some future *free Agent*, whether it shall be, or no. Well, if this won't do, Mr. M. has another Device, "The utmost that will follow, he says, is, It is necessary that such Ef-

“sects come to pass, but not that they shall NECESSARILY “come to pass,” p. 135. i. e. all that will follow from their *Hypothesis*, is, that what they call *contingent* or *free Events* will be *necessary Contingencies*, but not NECESSARILY *necessary Contingencies*. In short, it is a *Distinction* without a *Difference*; unless this be his Meaning, That the *Decree* which makes such Events *necessary*, was a *free*, not a *necessary Decree*. But what then? The Events that follow upon it, or the Effects that come to pass hereupon, tho’ once *free* with respect to the *Creator*, were *always necessary* as to the *Creature*, and what the *Creature* was never at *Liberty* to hinder.

6thly, The most popular Argument for the *eternal Certainty* of our *free Actions* is yet behind; viz. That the *Supposition* of it leaves the *Divine Perfections* as *unspotted*, at if there were no such *Certainty* of them *supposed*. — “Fore-knowledge, says Dr. Clarke, has no Influence at all upon the Things fore-known; because Things would be just as they are, tho’ there was no Fore-knowledge. Fore-knowledge, he goes on, does not cause the Things to be; but Things that are to be hereafter, — are the Cause of its being fore-known, that they shall be,” (Vid. his *Sermons*, Vol. I. p. 261.

But granting this to be all right, the Difficulty still remains in its full Strength, viz. How it came to be true from Eternity, that *Sin* (for Instance) not only *might*, but *would* be, the supposed Object of God’s Fore-knowledge? To say, it was *made* to be true, by an Act of the *Divine Will*, is to stain the *Divine Purity*; to say it was true, *antecedent* to any Act of the *Divine Will*, is to make it, in its own Nature, *necessary*, and to establish a *fatal Necessity* of what we call *Sin*: And in both Cases the *Liberty* of the *Creature*, and of its *Actions* is gone. So that, when Mr. Blifs says, “But to come to the Point: How can God’s Fore-knowledge induce any Necessity in the Actions of Men? — Mere Knowledge is inoperative, and in its very Nature absolutely incapable of producing any Effect,” p. 33. He never was farther from the Point than now; since Mr. F. from the Beginning allowed them this, “That Fore-knowledge does not *make*, but *suppose* the Object,” *Essay*, p. 108. “But then, in as much as it *supposes* the Object to be *absolutely certain*,” (which are Mr. B.’s
OWA

own Words, p. 34.) it carries in it as great a *Certainty* and *Necessity*, that such Events *shall* be, as the most *absolute Decree*; tho' he thinks it "a most unwarrantable Assertion, and opposite to the Truth and Reality of the Thing, to say so," p. 33. But why so unwarrantable; since he himself can tell us, That "*Sin*, supposing the Fore-knowledge of it, that it *will* be, *must* and *cannot but* be," p. 63. Neither is this a *novel* Notion: No less a Man than *Cicero* contends for the same. "If *Futurities* (says he) are fore-known" (and it is the same if all Events were *ever certain* or *future*) "a Series and Chain of Causes must be allowed; the Consequence of which will be, that every Thing that is done, is done through *Necessity*; and this will evacuate all just and wholesome Laws. 'Twill put an End to all Admonitions and Reproofs, and leave no Room for Piety or Prayers. Wherefore, he goes on, one of these two Evils must be chosen. Either we must give up the Freedom of Man's Will to maintain the Prescience of God," (or, which comes to the same, to maintain the certain Futurity of all our Actions) "or give up the Prescience of God" (or their *eternal Certainty*) "to secure Man's Freedom. For both, says *Cicero*, cannot consistently be held together." So that *Cicero* and Mr. F. are pretty well agreed in the *Argument*, at least. Ah, but then they differ in the *Management* of it. As how, I pray? "That excellent Author, says Mr. B. denies the Divine Prescience, only because he was forced to it, as he supposed, for the Security of Man's *Free will*." And is it not for the self and same Reason, that Mr. F. denies the *eternal Certainty* of our *free Actions*?—But even then *Cicero*, it seems, "does it with *Reluctancy*, esteeming it an Evil and Inconveniency, which he wou'd gladly have avoided, if he had known *how*," p. 32. And yet not with *greater Reluctancy*, I durst say, than Mr. F. must do, who might easily foresee, that there wou'd be those, who, in the Heat of their blind Zeal, wou'd sometimes miscall his Notion *Blasphemy*, and sometimes *Atheism*.—But what is Mr. F's *Conduct* then? Why, "our Gospel-Minister, says Mr. B., contends against it, when there is no manner of *Necessity* for doing so." How does he prove this? "I mean," says he, under the Supposition of its being a Thing *possible*, and no Ways inconsistent with Man's *Free-Agency*."

Strange

Strange indeed! When the obvious and main Design of all Mr. F. has wrote upon this Head, is, as I take it, to demonstrate the real *Inconsistency* of the *Liberty* of our Actions with the *Certainty* of them; which an infallible Fore-knowledge always supposes. And for this I will offer one Argument, as good with Mr. B. as ten thousand, and that is his *own full Testimony*, at the Entrance of this very Section. "The Sum of Mr. F.'s Reasoning, says he, "is this; Whatever is fore-known, *must* come to pass; "and therefore to suppose God to fore-know the sinful "Actions of Men, is to destroy the Freedom of their "Wills, and make their Sins *necessary* and *unavoidable*," p. 31. 32. He shou'd rather have said, [is to suppose the Freedom of their Wills *destroy'd*, and their Sins *necessary* and *unavoidable*] And now will Mr. B. say, it is *no ways inconsistent* with Man's *Free-Agency*, to have the Freedom of his Will *destroy'd*, and his *Actions* all *necessary* and *unavoidable*? But, perhaps, he may refer to an extraordinary Passage, as he calls it, in Mr. F.'s *Essay*, which he thought proper to take Notice of, p. 4. The Words are these; "But suppose, says Mr. F., I cou'd not have fix'd a plain "Contradiction on the received Notion of the Divine "Prescience, must I therefore needs admit it *immediately* "as true?" Now is there Room, says Mr. B., to make a "Question of this?" Why not? Unless nothing can be a Contradiction, *in itself*, but what Mr. F. or Mr. B. can prove to be so. "I ought indeed, Mr. F. goes on, to allow "it *possible*, for any Contradiction I can see in it; but the "Reality or Truth of the Notion must depend upon some "positive Evidence." "Is then, says Mr. B. the Possibility "of the Thing no positive Evidence in the Case?" Yes, doubtless. But is every Thing *possible* which Mr. B. does not see to be *impossible*? Or, is there no Difference between these two. [Not to see that there is a Contradiction;] (which is what Mr. F. says) and [To see there is no Contradiction?] It is only the *Latter*, I conceive, that implies the *real Possibility* of a Notion. "There may (says the Author of the "Enquiry concerning the Existence and Nature of God) "be a Contradiction in Nature, which does not appear to "be such to us. — 'Tis certain, says he, that sometimes a "Contradiction can't appear to be so to us, if we don't "sufficiently understand the Properties of its Subject. "This

" This Proposition, he goes on, *A Triangle hath not three*
 " *Angles equal to two right ones*, can't appear to be a Con-
 " tradiction to one, who is not well acquainted with the
 " Properties of a *Triangle*, p. 173.

As to *St. Austin's* piquant Censure, taken Notice of by
 Mr. B ; I can't see to what Purpose it is mentioned there,
 unless it be to shew the *rash Censure* of him who cites it.
 " To confess there is a God, says *Austin*, and yet to deny
 " his Fore-knowledge of Things to come, is the plainest
 " and most palpable Madness." But not more plain and
 palpable than the *Injustice* of our Author, to level this
 Quotation against Mr. F. ; Who, as he professes a firm Be-
 lief, that there is a God, even One that is *Light* and *Love* ;
 so he never once denied God's Fore-knowledge of Things
 to come, but only the *Contingency* of that which God fore-
 knows is to come, or the *eternal Certainty* of what may
 never come. And I am very sorry that our Gospel-Minister,
 the Reverend Mr. *Bliss*, shou'd insinuate such an unworthy
 Thing ; who, before the Publication of his Book, must have
 seen Mr. *Fancourt's* Vindication of himself against this un-
 righteous Accusation in a Letter to Mr. *Norman*. Where
 he tells him, " he finds it the more difficult to excuse him
 " here, not only because there is not a single Word or
 " Phrase (as he remembers) in his whole *Essay* that looks
 " this way, as if he doubted of God's Fore knowledge of
 " what will be, when it is true that it will be ; or, of his
 " Fore-knowledge of future Contingencies, if there be such
 " Contingencies : But because he every where speaks of the
 " Knowledge and Fore-knowledge of God, in as ample, au-
 " gust, and venerable Terms, as Mr. N. himself hath done."
 " And then he adds, " You, Sir, have made it necessary,
 " and must bear with me, if I transcribe such Passages as
 " plead my Innocency." Amongst a Number of which
 Mr. F. quotes the two following Ones out of his former
 Books, in his own Defence. " I am surprized (says he)
 " that any shou'd so far mistake my Notion, as to appre-
 " hend, I deny God's Omniscience or Fore-knowledge. It
 " never was any Doubt with me, whether God's Omni-
 " science does not take in the whole Compass of Truth ;
 " Or, whether the Divine Fore-knowledge does not extend
 " unto all future Truths." Vid. His Appendix to his Book,
 entitled, *The Greatness of the Divine Love vindicated*, p. 114.

And

And again, "Whatever is possible (he owns in his *Essay*,
 " p. 95.) God knows to be possible; whatever is past, God
 " knows to be past; whatever is present, He knows to be
 " present; whatever is future or to come, He knows to be
 " future or to come; whatever is certain, or that cannot
 " be otherwise, He knows to be certain, or that it cannot
 " be otherwise; and whatever is really uncertain, or truly
 " contingent, He knows to be really uncertain, or truly con-
 " tingent, viz. that it may be, or may not be; or that it
 " may be thus, or thus." Nay, when Mr. F. in the
Preface of his last Book observes, That "in his *Letter* to
 " Mr. N. he has made it evident, That the Controversy
 " is not about God's Fore-knowledge of what will certainly
 " be, but whether such Actions ought to be reputed free,
 " which were ever certain," p. 1. Mr. Millar, tho' the
 most censorious and partial of all his Opponents, is forced
 to acknowledge that this is the main Question; only in his
 diminutive Strain, affects causelessly to add, That it is pro-
 posed more judiciously than usual. Mr. Fancourt, says he, has
 proposed the main Question, more judiciously than usual,
 " Whether such Actions ought to be reputed free, which
 " were ever certain." Vid. Mr. M.'s *All future free Actions,*
future Contingencies, p. 112.

I am, SIR, with great Respect,

Tours, &c.

Feb. 7. 1732-3.

To

To the Reverend Mr. BLISS.

S I R,
YOUR Letter in Answer to Mr. Fancourt's
 ESSAY had been considered in *your own*
Method, had not the *Author* of the *Abstract*,
 a Gentleman wholly in your Sentiments, in-
 troduced the *Controversy* into the *public Pa-*
pers, and call'd aloud for a *more clear and compendious* Dis-
 cussion of the great Point under Debate. His Words are
 these;

" Mr. BAVIUS, No doubt you have observed, that
 " the Attention of Divines and good inquisitive Christians
 " has of late been greatly engaged about a celebrated
 " Controversy concerning *God's Prescience, Man's Free*
 " *Will, &c.* The Champions in this Cause are Mr. FAN-
 " COURT, Mr. MILLAR, Mr. NORMAN, Mr.
 " BLISS, &c. worthy Gentlemen all. But, unhappily,
 " the Dispute has swelled into so many Volumes, that no
 " Head can compass it: Even the Disputants themselves
 " have now almost lost Sight of their Original Design; the
 " Zeal of their Hearts having transported them so far, as
 " to use one another a little unkindly. The only Expe-
 " dient I can think of, says he, is to state the Matter in the
 " clearest Light; and to pray them, — to forbear their
 " Altercations a-while, 'till they have obliged the *Public*
 " with their Animadversions on the following *Abstract*. —
 " Pray, conjure them to be short, and not say one Word
 " beside the Purpose." (Vid. *The Grub street Journal*, No.
 " 134) — Now my *Animadversions* upon that *Abstract* you
 will find in my *first* Letter: The *Reason* of those that fol-
 low, (which are directed to Mr. Eliot, the *Abstracter's*
 SECOND) the Letters themselves will explain.

The Controversy I have reduced to this *single Point*,
Whether the Creature's free Actions were ever certain? This
 our Opponents AFFIRM, and We DENY. We contend,

that free Actions are only possible, till the Agent himself hath done some Thing to make them certain : Their present or past Existence proves no more. Amongst other Things, I there undertook for Mr. F., that if any cou'd demonstrate, that whatever is now certain, was ever certain ; he shou'd yield them, " That what we call free Actions, " were ever certain, and certainly fore-known from Eternity : " Tho' how to prove they were ever free also, and what " we might have prevented, will be the Question," p. 9. I have already examined your several Reasonings upon this Head, in six different Lights, in the two last Letters to Mr. Eliot. There are other Arguments yet behind, which we shall now consider.

7thly, Some argue, That the Perfection of the Divine Knowledge, which excludes all Possibility of Encrease, convinces them that every Action must be eternally certain, tho' free. (Vid. Mr. Norman's Letter, p. 43.) So, in your 9th Section, you say, "'Tis an obvious Objection against " Mr. F. that he makes the Knowledge of God to be variable," p. 26. And yet some kind of Variation you yourself allow ; as when you tell your Friend, " As the " Objects of God's Knowledge, as well as ours, vary in " this Manner," (*viz.* as one while future, another while present, and then past and gone,) " so there is no room to " doubt, but there must be some Correspondent Variation in " his Knowledge itself." And to support it, you bring in the famous Cudworth in Defence of the Notion, p. 28. But then you are pleased to add, Tho' " such a Change- " ableness as this in the Divine Intelligence, may innocently be asserted ; yet that which the Author of the Essay " advances, is of a quite different, and truly enormous " Kind. His Notion is, that the All-perfect and infinite " Being grows every Day wiser and wiser, and knows at " one time, what at another he was quite in the dark " about." And again, " God Almighty, according to " him, spells out the Truth, and from a total and eternal " Ignorance, — acquires at last a perfect Knowledge," &c. p. 29. Now wou'd not any one, from such a Representation as this, naturally suppose, that Mr. F. held, that some Truths escaped the Divine Notice ? Or, that there were more Truths now to be known, than God himself did now actually

actually know? Which indeed is proper Ignorance. Whereas the very Head, out of which you have drawn this enormous Charge, is a full and clear Confutation of it. He there tells his Correspondent, "I can heartily agree "with you, that God is an Omniscient Being, or (as "you very well explain it,) that he has the *whole Com-* " *pass* of Truth in his View," *Essay*, p. 93. Is there any Thing in this, Sir, like the Imputation of *real Ignorance* unto God? Mr. F. only contends, that "a Knowledge "which cannot alter, of an Object, which is always al- "tering, must either contain *more* than its Object at one "Time, or *less* than its Object at another; *i. e.* it must "be either a *redundant* or *defective* Knowledge, which is a manifest Imperfection in Knowledge," p. 94. He only pleads for a Variation in the Divine Knowledge, correspondent to the Variation of the Object. And have we not your own Authority to say, That "such a Changeableness "as this in the Divine Intelligence, may be *innocently as-*serted?"

Who will say, that God knows no more to be *past* or *present* to Day, than he did, ten thousand Years ago? Or, that it is any Imperfection in God, that his Knowledge of *past* or *present* Things shou'd vary or *encrease*, when it is only in Proportion to the Variation or *Encrease* of the Object known? If the Knowledge of God excludes all Possibility of Variation or *Encrease* in this Sense; so must the Object of Knowledge too. And so it must have been *ever impossible* for any Thing to have been otherwise than *in Fact* it has been: And what then becomes of your *Contingencies*, Events that *are* or *have been*, but which *might never have been*? Upon this Head your Friend, Mr. Norman, runs a Parallel between the Power of God and his Knowledge; and the latter he makes as *infinite* as the former, *Lett. p. 28.* And thus you yourself, I observe, make not only the Power of knowing, but the Knowledge of every Being, to be commensurate not only to the Object of Knowledge, but to the Nature of the Being in which it is; and therefore to be alike *finite* or *infinite*, as the Being itself, p. 5, 6. — Here, if this be the Meaning, That as the Power of God extends unto all that's possible, so the Knowledge of God extends unto all that's knowable; it is, as Mr. N. observes,

what Mr. F. knows very well ; and what he very well knows, Mr. F. has again and again acknowledged to be true. (Vid. Mr. F.'s *Let. to Mr. N. p. 20, 21.*) — Or, if by the *Knowledge* of God, you Gentlemen mean the *Divine Understanding*, or God's *Power to know*, (not to dispute the Propriety of the *Distinction*, namely, Whether God's *Understanding* or his *Power to know*, ought to be confounded with his *actual Knowledge* ; any more than his *Omnipotence* or his *Power to do*, ought to be confounded with the *Exercise* of that *Power*, or his *actual Doing*) we will still allow you, that as God's *Power of Doing* is not greater at one time than another, but is always alike infinite ; so his *Power of knowing* is the same. But if this be your Opinion, that God's *actual Knowledge* is equal to his *Power to know*, and is equally incapable of *Encrease* ; it is in effect to say, 1st, That God's *actual Knowledge* (and consequently the *Object* of his *Knowledge*) is as *unchangeable* as his *Essence* ; (for his *Power of knowing* is so;) which is at once to establish an absolute *Fatality*. And, 2^{dly}, That was there but any one new *Truth* more, in all the future Ages of *Eternity*, to be known, the *Divine Understanding* it self *could not* know it.

Whereas, as God *actually knows* all that's *actually true* ; so his *Power to know* is equal to all that's *possible* to be true. So that, tho' new *Truths* shon'd be ever arising, even unto *Eternity*, (according to the new *Modification* and *Turn* that free Agents shall give to their own *Minds* and *Wills* ; and according to the new *Determination* they shall give to the *active Powers* they shall carry about with them ;) yet his INFINITE UNDERSTANDING *can* and *will* receive and comprehend them all : Even tho' every such *Thought*, *Volition* and *Action*, being really free, and what might never have been, will upon its *Existence*, become an inexhaustible Fund of new *Relations*, and the Foundation of new *Truths*. And did not the *Divine Understanding* open, and its *Knowledge* encrease, as fast as such *Truths* presented themselves and encreased, it must be a *Knowledge* either *without an Object at one Time*, or *less than its Object at another Time*.

As to that Passage in Dr. *Cudworth*, which you are pleased to say, "is too pertinent to the present Argument, to be omitted," to me it is marvelously impertinent: And if it serves any Purpose, it is only to teach us this Lesson, That even Mr. *B.*'s own Mind is not so absolutely perfect but that "it doth sometimes understand; and sometimes, not understand; as if it were sometimes awake, and sometimes, asleep; or, like an Eye, sometimes open and sometimes shut." For who says, the Deity is ignorant of any Thing? Can he be ignorant, that hath the *whole Compass* of Truth in his View? Or, who says, the Deity Syllogizes about any Thing; or, acquires a perfect Knowledge by Way of Reasoning and Discourse? Who doubts, whether all the Mediums of Knowledge and their Connection with the Extremes, are present at once to the Divine Mind? But we can easily allow you, that God's Understanding comprehends all Intelligibles, with their Relations and Verities, at one View; and yet suppose too, that the *Contingency* of what *will certainly* be, or of what God *certainly foreknows*, is not one of those Intelligibles, Relations or Verities; "which Notion" (was I disposed to return your Compliment, I might say,) "if it be above the dull Capacities of some, who measure every Thing by their own Scantling, this is a Thing that we cannot help."

But as you blame Mr. *F.* *one while* for making God's Knowledge of the Creature VARIABLE, tho' the Creature itself is *always varying*; and tho, you yourself have allowed it: So at *another time* it is his Fault, it seems, to make God's Knowledge of *himself* INVARIABLE; tho' he is ever the same, a *fixed* and *unalterable* Being. "God's Knowledge of himself, you tell your Friend, is variable in this Respect, and the Nature of the Thing requires it shou'd be so; tho', it seems, Mr. *F.* does not see it." Well, since Mr. *B.* doth *see* it, he will be so kind, perhaps, to shew it others. In what Respect then, is God's Knowledge of himself a *variable* Knowledge? Why, "before all Worlds, say you, he foreknew, he shou'd exist at this Instant, and be holy, just, and good. At this Instant he is conscious of his own Existence, with these Attributes belonging to him." But what then? Did God before
all

all Worlds foreknow, he shou'd *not exist*, 'till such an *Instant*; nor be holy, just, and good, 'till *then*? Which yet is always implied in an *eternal Fore-knowledge* of the several *Modifications* of Matter, and the *temporary Existence* of *Creatures* and their *Actions*. You go on; "And in the Ages to come he will have a reflex Knowledge, or remember that he did *now* exist, and acted as a Being infinitely holy, just, and good, must be supposed to do." But will he also be conscious, that he *no longer Existeth*, nor acts as such a Being? Which yet is the Case, with Respect to his Knowledge of such *Creatures* as are *past* and gone. So that, if God's Knowledge of himself be at all *variable*, it is not, at least, in *this Respect*, as you inadvertently affirm. It *is*, and *ever will be*, true of the Divine Being, and of his essential Perfections, that they *are*; and not only that they *were*, or that they *will be*: And in this Sense his Knowledge of himself is, like himself, *invariable*, as Mr. F. justly observes, *Essay*, p. 93. And thus the Instance which he brings, explains his Meaning; "The Ratios and Proportions, that certain Quantities and Numbers have to one another," not only *have been*, or *will be*, in such a Part of Duration, the *same*; but it may be always said, that they *are* the *same*. Of this Sort are all *Mathematical* and *abstracted Truths* [as, that the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two right Angles.] They don't pass from a State of *Non-existence* into *Existence*, and then cease to be; (if you will allow *Truths* to *exist*) but the same Attributions belong to them, under all the Successions of Time. Whereas this cannot be always said of the *temporary Existence* of *Creatures* and their *Actions*, that they *are*; but as there are assignable Parts of *past* Duration, in which it cou'd only be said, that they *will be*, or (perhaps) that they *may be*; so there are assignable Parts of *future* Duration, when it shall no longer be said, that they *are*, but only that they *have been*: Which is not one and the *same Truth*, adequately so, delivered under *different Expressions*, or in *different Tenses*, as you imagine; but they are *different Truths* too, and convey in Whole, or in Part, *different Ideas*. Thus (which seems to be the Case which Mr. F. had his Eye particularly upon) if any Thing be done to Day, which was only possible to be done, the Day before; it would have been

been *false*, to have affirmed concerning it *then*, either that it *would* be, *is*, or *hath been*; the bare Possibility of its Existence implying neither of them.

But you query; "What if *Eugenio* die on *Thursday*, does "this change the Nature of the Proposition delivered on "*Wednesday*, viz. *Eugenio is alive*? Does it make the "Proposition as then delivered, cease to be true?" Yes; cease to be *any longer* true: Else why don't you still say, *Eugenio is alive*? Why do you vary the *Tense* now, and and only say, *He was alive*; if there be no Variation in the Thing? Was the Truth of that Proposition, in all its Circumstances, still *invariably the same*, why must the *Terms* of the Proposition *vary*? In any assignable Part of Duration we can always say, *Twice two is equal to four*; but not so, *Eugenio is alive*: And why; but because the Life of *Eugenio* co-existeth with *some* Parts of Duration only, not with *all*? So that, tho' that which is true on *Wednesday*, does not on *Thursday* cease to be true, with respect to *Wednesday*; yet with respect to *Thursday* it is *no more* true; and therefore Mr. F. chose, I suppose, to say it *ceaseth* to be true. And now, if there be *consummate Nonsense* on one Side or the other, (as you are pleased to phrase it) the impartial must be left to judge, to which Side it belongs.

As to the Instance of a *Globe* and *Cube*; If the *Matter*, as such, under its various Modifications, remains the *same*, the Change must be in the *Figure*, and not in the *Matter*, when it is turned from a *Globe* into a *Cube*; tho' you tell your Friend, "the *Figure* never changes from what it is." However, as at one Time the Matter is of a *globular* Form, and at another Time of a *cubical* Form; and as the *Forms* and the *Ideas* of them are *different*; so when God *knows* it to be *globular*, his Perception *differs* from *that* by which he *knows* it to be *cubical*: And for the same Reason, his *Knowledge* of a merely *possible*, or *future* Thing, is not *adequately* the same with his Knowledge of a *present* or *past* Thing; because *merely possible*, *future*, *past*, and *present*, are not wholly the same. And indeed, else how is it "very obvious, as Mr. N. affirms, that God sees Things, no "otherwise than *in Truth* they are?" Let. p. 30.

March 2, 1732-3.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

To the Reverend Mr. NORMAN:

S I R,

AFTER a long *Introduction*, you are pleased to tell Mr. F., “ Well, Sir, the *positive Evidence*, which you require for the Truth or Reality of our Notion, and on which you say, it must depend, we are hitherto at a Loss for, to support and confirm Yours,” p. 12. But *positive Evidence* to prove a *Negative* is an *unequal Demand*. Not to mention that *hitherto* you had only considered his *first Letter* about *Prescience*, and but a *Part* of that; the Business of which is not to assign the *Reasons* of his Opinion, but to give a more *general View* of the *Nature* and *Importance* of the Point in Controversy. And yet even there he has advanced such Evidence, which well deserv'd your Notice, tho' for Reasons best known to your self, you pass it by in Silence; particularly, the Quotation out of Mr. Clarkson, p. 77. 78. and a *Detail* of *important Truths*, which, by the Consent of every one, are certainly defensible upon this Principle, That Sin was not *eternally certain*, and consequently no Object of an *eternal* and *certain Fore knowledge*; but which at best are very doubtful upon the *contrary Hypothesis*. (See his *Essay*, p. 71, 72.) — “ In the mean Time we think, say you, that *Revelation* is plainly on that side of the Question which we maintain.” And then you produce your *strong Proofs*.

“ There we read, you tell Mr. F., that God is *perfect in Knowledge*, Job 36. 4.” — But here, Sir, you have two considerable Difficulties to get over; To prove 1st, that the Text is meant of God at all: 2^{dly}, That it is any thing to your Purpose, tho' it be, — Mr. Poole and most of the *Criticks*, understood the Words as spoken of *Elihu* himself, to whom the former Part of the Verse, doubtless, belongs! For truly my Words shall not be false, he that is perfect in Knowledge is with thee. *Elihu* speaks here, not of an *absolute*

lute, but of a comparative Perfection in Knowledge; or rather of his upright and sincere Application of what he knew, to the Matter in Hand; only speaks of himself in the third Person, for the greater Modesty. Job is made to know, he had not a Novice to do with, or one that was partial. Elihu assures him, he was thoroughly acquainted with the Affair, and wou'd be upright in his Opinion; and for this Reason did the more deserve his Attention and Regard. — But had the Words been really intended of God himself; (as those in the 37th Chap. Ver. 16. certainly are) yet where's the Force of the Argument? God is perfect in Knowledge; therefore what will be, may never be; or, therefore some Events were eternally certain, tho' never decreed; or, therefore all the Enormities and Impieties which ever existed in Time, God knew, before all Time, wou'd certainly come to pass, tho' they were not certain: And this, tho' (according to you your self) God sees Things no otherwise than IN TRUTH they are, p. 30.

But, say you, we read also, "That his Understanding is infinite, Plal, 147. 5." We do so: And what then? Therefore he understands Sin to be, what it is not; to be certain, while it is only possible. Nervous Reasoning! Whereas did God understand any one Thing otherwise than it is, his Understanding would be limited, wou'd from that Time cease to be infinite. Tho' his Understanding be infinite; yet to understand four to be seven, i. e. to be four and not four, is below his Understanding. That Understanding which takes in the whole Compass of Truth; and, were Truths innumerable more, that cou'd and wou'd comprehend them also; is more truly infinite, than if it mistook Falshoods for Truths.

But we are told too, "That all Things are naked and open to the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do, Heb. 4. 13." Very right: Or, as it might be rendered, to whom we must give an Account, *κατὰ δὲ ὧν ἐλόγισται*. But must we give an Account of our Actions, as really free, and what we might have hindered; which were never free, but eternally fixed: The more naked and open any free Power is unto the Eyes of God, the more clearly, one wou'd think, must its Freedom shew. As sure as the Will of an accountable Creature has a real Power to incline either Way; so sure, we may be, that to his Eyes, to whom all Things are naked,

naked and open, it can never appear under a Necessity to incline only one Way.

But you go on ; we read, " That Times are not hidden from the Almighty, Job 24. 1." — What then ? As the Times, (or Events which happen in them,) cannot be view'd as past, while they are present ; nor, as present, while they are future ; so neither can Times [or Events] be view'd as future, what will certainly be, while they are only possible, and may never be. Tho' some Criticks, even Pool himself, prefers a very different Reading, thus ; " Why or how are not Times (i. e. the Times and Seasons appointed for the Punishment of Evil-Doers, about which the Dispute was) hidden or reserved by or with God (i. e. kept as a Secret in his own Breast, and concealed from the Knowledge of Mankind : How can you say or think with any Colour, that these Times are fixed and manifested to all Men, and that Sinners are constantly punished in this Life, and that so notoriously that all good Men see it, as was said, chap. 22. 15, — 19.) Seeing (as the Particle *vau* is rendered, chap. 19. 28. or for, as it is frequently used) they that know him (that give themselves to understand and consider his Doings in the World, who of all Men are most likely to know this, if it were true and certain) do not see his Days, to wit, of punishing the Wicked in this Life, as was said before." But, perhaps, the next Text will serve your Purpose better.

" He maketh known what shall be in the latter Days, Dan. 2. 28." The whole Verse runs thus ; But there is a God in Heaven that revealeth Secrets, and maketh known to the King, NEBUCHADNEZZAR, what SHALL BE in the latter Days. But was it ever any Question with Mr. F., Whether God knows, that what shall be, will be ; or, mayn't make it known to another, if he please ? There are, doubtless, many Revolutions in Providence fixed in their Natural Causes, or in the Divine Counsels, that remain a Secret unto us, 'till the God of Heaven thinks fit to reveal them. Let Mr. F.'s Opponents but shew, that what Daniel says shall be in the latter Days, and was then certain to be, was yet then truly contingent, and might never have been, and we submit.

Your last Text is that in *Isaiab*, Chap. 41. 21. — 23.
 " Produce your Cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong
 " Reasons

" *Reasons* — let them shew us what SHALL happen — the
 " Things that ARE TO COME HEREAFTER; that
 " we may know that ye are Gods." As if the Debate was still
 about what shall happen, or is to come hereafter. Nothing
 less; unless you cou'd prove also, that such Events were
 at the same time contingent, what might never have
 happened, or might notwithstanding never have come to
 pass hereafter. And are these the strongest Proofs, to
 evince such an eternal Fore knowledge of all the Sins and
 Miseries in the World, as implies that they were ever cer-
 tain, and what must infallibly have been, p 33. ? No, no.

There are, you say, " a Number of express Prophecies
 " (the fulfilling of which depended upon the Behaviour of
 " Men acting freely) of whose punctual Accomplishments
 " we have undoubted Assurance;" and they " oblige you
 " to believe such a Prescience as you defend, and we oppose,"
 p. 12, 13. Here I shall content myself to repeat the An-
 swer already given to this Argument, in Mr. F.'s Review,
 p. 29, 30. which neither you nor Mr. Millar (as I can find)
 have as yet reply'd unto. " Consider, Sir, is every ex-
 " press Prophecy an absolute one? Remember the Case of
 " Nineveh. Or, is there no Difference between God's
 " making use of our free Agency to bring about the Thing
 " foretold, and a Prophecy's depending upon such Agency
 " for its Accomplishment? Jacob's Lie was a Means to
 " obtain the promised Blessing; but did the promised
 " Blessing depend upon his Lie? Produce but one absolute
 " Prophecy of this Kind, and it is enough; I'll yield the
 " Point. I mean, says Mr. F., a Prophecy that was not
 " only conditionally, but absolutely certain at the Time of
 " the Prophecy; and yet so depended upon the Behaviour
 " of Men acting freely, that it cou'd not have been accom-
 " plished without it; i. e. (he goes on) shew me but one
 " Event, which was absolutely sure to be, and yet cou'd not
 " have been, without such free Actions of the Creature,
 " which, upon the whole, might never have been, and I
 " own my self confuted." And, 'till this be done, your
 past Proofs of the Perfection of the Divine Knowledge may
 be allowed their just Strength; and yet we may see Cause
 still to say, with the excellent Mr. Boyle, " That the
 " greatest Wits that have endeavoured to reconcile —
 " Prescience with Liberty, — have been reduced to main-

tain something or other, that thwarts some acknowledged Truth or Dictate of Reason." Or, with the learned Bishop *Davenant*, "That there are the same Difficulties in according the Liberty of Man's Free-will with the infallible Prescience of God, as there are in according it with the absolute Decrees of Predestination." And if this be the real Case, as I take it to be, then how easily might we retort in your own obliging Strains, That your Notion of an eternal Prescience *without* a Decree might have been left "among the *arcana imperii*, the secret Things which belong to God; and you excused from the Trouble of publishing your Papers, the Loss of which, we fancy, the World wou'd not have over-much lamented."

In your next Paragraph you tell Mr. F., "He has attempted, you confess, a Reply to some Passages of Scripture offered against your Opinion." And you, I confess, have attempted also to defend those Passages against his Reply: But which of the *two Attempts* have been most successful, let others judge. His "Explications of them, you go on, — may look plausible, and be countenanced by a few Commentators. But it is well known, that many of the Criticks are against him," p. 13. A clear Case then; since every one must allow, that *many* is more than a *few*, and a *Critick* is better than a *Commentator*. But till now, I was so foolish as to judge of an *Exposition*, not so much by the *Quality* or *Number* of the *Expositors*, as by the *Strength* and *Cogency* of their *Reasons*. And then you mention the Words of the Psalmist, *Thou understandest my Thought afar off*, Ps. 139. 2. in Defence of your Notion. But before they will answer your Expectations, you must, I conceive, make out these three Things; 1st, That by understanding his Thoughts *afar off*, David means, that God knew from Eternity, not only that they might be, but that they wou'd be. 2^{dly}, That tho' he knew them from Eternity, he never decreed them. 3^{dly}, That tho' God ever knew, that they wou'd certainly be, yet those Thoughts were never the less contingent, and might never have been. Now he, I think, must have a very clear Understanding indeed, that can see all this in those Words; and as happy an Elocution too, to set it in a convincing Light before others. And yet every Branch is a Corner-Stone in your Scheme;

Scheme ; and if any One of them be wanting in your *Proof*, the whole *Fabrick* tumbles.

But, 1st, How must we be sure, that by *afar off*, is meant from *Eternity* ? Do you argue from the *Emphasis* of the *Hebrew* ? But the *Critick* you appeal to, Mr. *Pool* himself, observes, that the *Original* signifies a *Distance of Place* as well as *Time* ; and refers us to *Gen. 22. 4.* and *Exod. 2. 4.* as an *Evidence* of it. *Then on the third Day Abraham lift up his Eyes, and saw the Place afar off. And Moses Sister stood afar off, to wait what would be done to him.* — Do you draw your *Argument* from the *Judgment* of the *Translators*, and plead, that by their using this *Phrase*, *afar off*, to express the *Original*, they give the *Preference* to your *Interpretation* ? This will not serve your turn neither. For when they design a *Distance of Time* and not of *Place*, they use a different *Phrase*, as, *a great while to come ; long ago ;* and the like. Thus they translate the *Hebrew* in the following *Places*, *2 Sam. 7. 19. 2 Kings 19. 25. And this was yet a small Thing in thy sight, O Lord. But thou hast spoken also of thy Servant's House for a GREAT WHILE TO COME.* — *Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it ? and of ancient Times that I have formed it ?* Nay, *afar off*, in the *Language* of the *Translators*, does mostly, if not always, denote a *Distance of Place*, never (as I remember) a *Distance of Time*, and much less from *Eternity*. You may consult at your *Leisure* the following *Texts*, *Num. 9. 10. 2 Kings 4. 25. Exr. 9. 13. Neb. 12. 43. Job 26. 25. Ps. 138. 6. Isa. 23. 7. and 66. 19. Jer. 23. 23. and 49. 30. and 51. 5.* — And I am the more confirmed in my *Opinion*, that *afar off* must have a *Reference* unto *Place* here, not only because it fully answers the *Psalmist's Design*, and entirely corresponds with the *Context* ; but because it makes every *Thing* in the *Text* to run easy, to be proper and natural. If *afar off* be the same as *from Heaven*, then the *present Tense* is right, *Thou understandest my Thought afar off, i. e. from Heaven.* But if *afar off* be made to signify, *long ago*, or *from Eternity*, then the *preter Tense* had been more proper ; as thus ; *Thou didst understand my Thought afar off, i. e. long ago, or from Eternity.* Thus, when the *Psalmist* says, *Tho' the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the Lowly ; but the Proud he knoweth afar off, Ps. 138. 6.*
had

had he meant from Eternity, it wou'd have been, *The Proud he knew afar off*. But if he intends from Heaven, then the Diction is juſt and proper, *The Proud he knows afar off*, i. e. *from Heaven*. —

Befides, as that Psalm, according to Mr. Pool, is an Appeal to God's *Omniscience* againſt the Reproaches of *David's Enemies*, concerning his Integrity; ſo it led *David* to ſpeak of God's intimate *Knowledge* of what he *then was*, but not of his *eternal Fore-knowledge* of what he *might or wou'd* hereafter be. He repreſents accordingly the *Words* he *had* ſpoken, and the *Designs* he *had* formed, as naked before God. Again, the Thought that God is ſaid to underſtand, is a Thought that *then was* *David's*, and not only a Thought that hereafter *wou'd* be, or perhaps *never might* be his; *Thou underſtandeſt my Thought afar off*. Nay, it was what God by *ſearching* knew to be in him, v. 1. And when he cries out, *ſuch Knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it*, v. 6. You will find by the Verſes before, that the Knowledge which did ſo aſtoniſh, was not God's eternal *Preſcience* of what *David* wou'd be, but his vaſt and perfect *Comprehenſion* of what he *then was*, or *had been*. — And when the *Pſalmiſt* ſets forth the *Omnipreſence* of God there in the loſtiest Terms, it is ſtill with the ſame View: To ſhew that every Thing which *is* or *has been*, muſt needs be known unto that God, who *was* and *is* ever preſent in all Places, and with every Creature *below*; tho' his Glories be chiefly diſplay'd *above*. So that, as Mr. Henry expreſſes it, the Senſe ſeems plainly this, *Thou underſtandeſt my Thought afar off* i. e. from the Height of Heaven, thou ſeeſt into the Depths of the Earth, according to that, *Pſ. 99. 14. From the Place of his Habitation he looketh upon all the Inhabitants of the Earth*. The *Syriack* Verſion, I find, inclines to the ſame Interpretation, *Eſi procul a me abeſſe videaris, ut qui calorum incola ſis*.

But cou'd you, Sir, have made good this Part of your Argument; yet how you wou'd have got thro' the other two, viz. That tho' God certainly *knew David's Thoughts from Eternity*, he never decreed them; or, that they were notwithstanding ſuch Thoughts as *David* cou'd have preſented; you have not yet told us, neither, I ſuppoſe, can

can you. Only as Mr. F's professed *Advocate*, you are sure to remember your *Duty*; and therefore kindly tell him, "That if he had opposed their Sentiments with more Diffidence of his own, his Modesty wou'd not have been greater than what is thought very becoming in all such Cases." And yet he has, I humbly conceive, *opposed* their Sentiments with *as much* Diffidence and Modesty, as *some* Men dispense *Reproofs*. Tho' after all, neither Mr. *Pool* nor Dr. *Patrick* make the Phrase, *from Eternity*, to be the *only*, nor yet the *principal* Sense of the Words, *afar off*. "Thou understandest my Thoughts, (that is (lays Mr. *Pool*) "all my secret Counsels and Designs) *afar off*, i. e. before they are perfectly formed in my Mind." (Which Words you cautiously omit;) and when he goes on, Thou knowest what my Thoughts *will* be, in such and such Circumstances," he adds by way of Restriction, "long before I know it." I own he does at last conclude, "nay, from Eternity." But then this he mentions, rather as an Opinion of his own, *not discountenanced* by that Text, than as a Sense *actually contained*, or *necessarily implied* in the Words. — But as for Dr. *Patrick*, he says not a Syllable of God's *eternal Prescience* of our *present Thoughts*, but only that God searches out our *future Designs* in their *remote Tendencies*; which Mr. F. ever supposed to be a Truth, tho' not intended in this Psalm, *Essay*, p. 113. "My *Inclinations*, says the Dr. are so perfectly understood by thee, that before I have *conceived* any Design, it is visible unto thee." But to pass on.

You are right in your Observation; it is not a bare Prescience in general, but a Prescience or Fore-knowledge in Case of *Contingencies*, that is the Point now in Dispute; or, (as I shou'd chuse rather to express it) whether there be any *future Contingencies* to be fore-known. And if you can by clear and undeniable Instances make good *such a Prescience*, (or rather, *such Contingencies*) it must, doubtless, decide the Controversy.

You instance *first* in the *Fall of Adam*, which both Sides allow to be a *contingent Event*, what *Adam* might have prevented; yet this, you contend, was certainly fore-known from Eternity, *viz.* that it *wou'd* be. Your Argument is this; because "a *Saviour* was from Eternity ap-
" pointed

“ pointed to recover him and his Posterity from that Fall,
 “ and the fatal Consequences thereof,” p. 15. And then
 you mention *the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World*,
 as a Proof of it, Rev. 13. 8.

To which I answer; When the *Sacrifice* of the Lamb of
 God becomes a certain, fixed, and necessary Thing, Adam's
 Sin, the necessary Fore-runner of that Sacrifice, must cease
 to be an uncertain, unfixed, and contingent Thing; or the
 Lamb might have been slain without a Cause, and in vain.
 If you make the Scheme and Decree of Redemption absolute
 as well as eternal, you make the Fall of Adam ABSOLUTE-
 LY and eternally necessary, to make way for Redemption.
 Therefore, as to the Text now mentioned, you, Sir, need
 not to be informed, that no less a Man than Dr. Hammond
 disputes the *Justness* of our Translation. He says, “ That the
 “ Words here shou'd not be read thus, [*The Lamb slain from*
 “ *the Beginning of the World*] — but thus, *ὁ ἀνέστης ὁ*
 “ *γενήσεται ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου*, [*whose Names were not writ-*
 “ *ten from the Foundation of the World*, (i. e. were never
 “ *written) in the Book of Life of the Lamb that was slain*]
 “ as may sufficiently appear by comparing this Expression
 “ here with ch. 17. 8. where the Words are [*whose Names*
 “ *are not written in the Book of Life from the Founda-*
 “ *tion of the World.*]” And if this be the true render-
 ing, then here is nothing at all said concerning the Time,
 when the Sufferings of Christ were decreed. — But shou'd
 the present Translation be insisted upon; then I choose to
 understand that Passage, with Mr. F., either of the first
 Promise, That the Seed of Woman shou'd bruise the Serpent's
 Head; which was made in the first Ages of the World,
 even immediately after Adam's Fall: Or, if you will con-
 sider the Lamb as slain before all Worlds, that then it was
 only a provisional Remedy, in Case of our first Parent's Fall,
 which an infinite Mind, without any Time or Labour, tho'
 with exquisite and absolute Wisdom, formed for our Re-
 covery. As God had settled in his wise Decree, how he
 wou'd act towards Man, whether standing or falling; so
 the Scheme of Redemption contained the One, as the Cove-
 nant of Innocency pointed out the Other.

But let us see, what you have to object against the for-
 mer, against understanding that Passage of the first Promise,

Ge.

Ec. 'Tis only this, "You cannot but take Notice with
 "Concern, that as Mr. F. has revived the Socinian Way
 "of Reasoning against the Fore-knowledge of God ;"
 (you should have said, against necessary Contingencies) "so
 "he goes into their Manner of interpreting Scripture in
 "Defence of it," p. 16. Now (as Mr. F. has justly ob-
 served in his *Apology*, p. 35) "their Way of Reasoning
 "upon this Head is either right or wrong. If it be wrong,
 "like Men of Reason, let Mr. B. and Mr. N. expose and
 "confute it ; if right, like Men of Probity, let them own
 "and acknowledge it." But, need Mr. N. be told, that
 even some of the strictest Predestinarians have given in to
 the same Gloss? From the Foundation of the World, WREMS
 makes to be, not from Eternity, but from the Beginning, in
 Reference to that Promise, Gen. 3. 15. which was made
 after the Fall. Or, (as Wollebins chooses) in Reference to
 those early Sacrifices, which typified our Saviour's Death.
 (See Leigh's Exposition of the N. Testament, p. 600.) And
 Mr. Henry will have the Coats of Skins with which our
 first Parents were cloathed, to be the Skins of those Beasts;
 which were slain, not for Food, but for Sacrifice ; and "to
 "typify the great Sacrifice which in the latter End of the
 "World should be offered once for all : Thus the first
 "Thing, saith he, that died, was a Sacrifice, or Christ in
 "a Figure ; who is therefore said to be the Lamb slain
 "from the Foundation of the World."

And indeed nothing is more common, in Scripture, than
 for such Things to be represented as done from the Founda-
 tion of the World, which were not done at the Beginning of
 the Creation, much less before it ; but only in the first Age
 of the World, tho' some time after the Fall. Thus, the
 Works of God are said to have been finished, ἀπὸ κατα-
 βολῆς κόσμου, from the Foundation of the World, Heb. 4. 3.
 and yet they were not finished, till six Days after the
 Foundation was laid, v. 4. And the Apostle having taken
 Notice of the Repetition or Frequency of the Jewish Sacri-
 fices, absolutely denies it of Christ. For, says he, then
 must he often have suffered since the Foundation of the World,
 ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, Heb. 9. 26. And yet there was no
 need he should have suffered once, 'till after the Fall. Thus,
 the Devil is said to be a Murderer from the Beginning,
 John 8. 44. And yet he was not an eternal Murderer, not
 even

even at the Beginning of the Creation. And *Abel* is said to be one of those, whose Blood was shed from the Foundation of the World, ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. *Luke* 11. 50 51. tho' *Cain* that slew him was not born till some time after the Fall; and *Abel* was a Keeper of Sheep, and brought his Offering to the Lord, before he was slain. — But why do I multiply Arguments, since you are willing “to suppose for once, that what is said of the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World, is to be understood as respecting the first Promise of the Messiah,” p. 16. —

Tho' had the Passage imply'd all that you wou'd have it, viz. That the Lamb of God was slain from Eternity: Yet, as this must refer only to the Decree of God concerning that great Sacrifice, or to that federal Transaction, supposed to have passed between the Father and Son about the Affair of our Redemption; so the Question would still remain, Whether such Decree or Transaction were absolute or conditional? Whether they were grounded upon the eternal Foresight of the real Certainty, or bare Possibility, of Adam's Fall? The former is your Opinion; the latter, ours. “It is, you say, no Scruple with you, to make the Decree of Redemption absolute as well as eternal,” p. 19. Nor is it any Scruple with us, to suppose, that what is absolutely decreed, must be; especially, since we have the Oath of God, That as he hath purposed, so shall it stand, *Isa.* 14. 24. And yet the Execution of this absolute Decree depends, by your own Confession, upon a contingent Event, the Fall of Adam; which need not have been: Which is, in effect, to say, the Decree was both absolute and conditional. But he that can shew this, either that our Redemption, tho' absolutely decreed, need not have been; or, tho' it must needs have been, yet it depended upon a Fall that might never have been; may shew any Thing, even that both Parts of a Contradiction are true.

But why will Mr. N. undertake such an unequal Task? It is, it seems, because you cannot suppose, “That so great a Design should be formed, and the Measures by which it was carried on, should be fixed between the Father — and the Son — when neither of them knew there wou'd be any Occasion for the Execution of it,” p. 18. But remember, Sir, they knew notwithstanding, there might be Occasion; since they designed a free Creature,

ture, one that *might* either *stand* or *fall*. And this, we conceive, makes the *provisional* Remedy as *wise* and *kind*, as if it had been infallibly fore known there *would be* Occasion ; nay, *more so*, as it carries in it a *more forward Solitude* in God (if I may so express it) for the *Happiness* of his *future Creature*, and at the same time a *clearer Evidence* of the *absolute Innocency* of the *Creator*. While you seem to complement the *Divine Penetration*, by supposing an *eternal, certain Foresight* of *Adam's actual Fall* ; you are not, methinks, over-obliging to God's *infinite Purity* and *Love*, that shoud suffer such a *Creature* to be made, which he *infallibly fore-knew would fall* ; and not only so, but that he as *certainly fore knew would* (notwithstanding the *Covenant of Redemption*) involve so many *Millions* of his *unborn Posterity* in monstrous *Rebellions* and everlasting *Misery*. Besides, What if another should say, He cannot suppose, That “ a *Saviour* was from *Eternity* appointed to recover “ *Adam* and his *Posterity* from that *Fall*, and the fatal *Consequences thereof* ;” (which yet is your and Mr. B.'s Opinion, p. 15.) since neither the *Father* nor the *Son* *certainly knew*, there would be *any Disposition* in the *greater Part* of *Adam's ruined Race* to *accept* the *Salvation* ; nay, since, upon your Principles, they *infallibly fore-knew*, that the *most* would *finally reject* it, and bring upon themselves a *double Damnation* for their *Refusal* ? What, if another cannot suppose this ; must we therefore give in to an *absolute Decree* of *Reprobation* and *Predamnation* ; or hold an *absolute Preterition*, as fatal to the *Creature* as either ?

But you ask ; “ Can Mr. F. think it becoming infinite “ *Wisdom*, to make such an *Appointment*, and to enter “ into such a *Stipulation*, upon *Grounds* altogether *uncertain and precarious* ?” p. 18. You mean, when God only foresaw the *Possibility*, not the *Certainty* of our *Fall*. Why not ; as well as *sacrifice* his *Son* also, which is more still, unconceivably more, for those whom (according to you Gentlemen) God certainly foresaw would *despise* the *Sacrifice* ? Tho' by the Way, how came the *Grounds* of such *Appointment* and *Stipulation*, upon your own Scheme, to be so very *certain* ; when the *Execution* is supposed wholly to depend upon the *contingent Act* of *Adam's fickle Will* ; or, upon a *Fall* that *might never have been* ?

-- Nothing in our Opinion is more becoming *consummate Wisdom*, whether in *human* or *divine* Governments, while they have to do with *free Agents* for their *Subjects*, than to form great *Designs* both of *Rewards* and *Punishments*, and solemnly to *concert* them too; where the *actual Execution* of them depends upon the *uncertain Determination* of the Subject's *Will*, i. e. upon their *Obedience* or *Disobedience*. Which is so far "from taking away almost all the Trans-
"actions of Mankind from under the *Divine Govern-
"ment*;" (as you imagine, p. 26.) that to us, there appears no room for any new *Interpositions* in the Government of the *moral World* without it, i. e. if all Things are so settled already, that the *Transactions* of Mankind were all ever *certain*, *fixed*, and *necessary*.

This *provisional Decree* of *Redemption* you can allow to have been without any *Time* and *Labour*. But "would
"not that have been the Case, say you, if it had been
"left till *Adam* had fallen?" Say it, wou'd; what then? Why then, you think, it wou'd have been *Time* enough to have thought of his "*Recovery*, and to have resolved upon
"the *Method*, in which it was to be effected," p. 18, 19. In your Judgment it wou'd. But if the *Accounts* in *Scripture* of this *Provision* are of an earlier Date, (which you yourself contend for) is it not a *little bold* to prescribe to the *Divine Being* *Times* and *Seasons*? You make the *absolute Decree* of *Redemption* to be *eternal*. And why? Because the *certain Foresight* of *Adam's actual Fall* was *eternal*. Why then mayn't another conceive of this *provisional Decree* as *eternal* too; since the *certain Foresight* of the *Possibility* of *Adam's Fall* is supposed to be *eternal* also. Assign you a Reason, why it was not *Time* enough to decree *Man's Creation* just before the *Execution*; or *absolutely* to decree our *Redemption* just after the *Fall*; and, perhaps, the same Reason, or a better, may be assigned, why this *provisional Decree* wou'd not have been *Time* enough then. Nay, was it not, of the two, more expedient, that an *absolute Decree* concerning the Means of our *Recovery* shou'd not have took Place, till after the *Fall*, that *Adam* might have appeared to have been indeed *free* in the Day of his grand *Trial*, and not under a *Necessity* of falling by virtue of such a *Decree*; than that this *provisional Remedy* ought to commence when? Since, whether we suppose it to be *after*, *at*, or *before* the
the

the Fall, the *Liberty* of our first Parents is not, in any *Respect* or *Degree*, lessened or infringed by such a *conditional* kind *Provision*. Nay, it rather suggesteth to us a worthy Reason, why infinite *Goodness* should permit *Satan* to have *Eve* for a while to list her, as *Wheat*; (to allude to our *Saviour's* Words) since infinite *Wisdom* had a *Provision* also ready and concerted; should either *Eve*, being deceived, be in the Transgression; or should *Adam*, softened by conjugal Affection, fall through her Importunity. — However, “you confess, it seems, you should much sooner “be brought to think so,” (*i. e.* to come into a *Sublapsarian* Provision, that was never thought of, till after the Fall) “than to believe that there was a Consultation, before all Worlds, about settling a Scheme, which for any “thing the Divine Persons knew to the contrary — might “have been entirely useless.” But why more useless than your Decree to create *Adam* with such a Freedom, as left it certain from Eternity, that he would abuse this Freedom? Nay, if *Adam's* actual Standing would have rendered this Provision entirely useless; why did not an absolute, eternal Decree of Redemption, much more, render his Power of standing entirely useless too? I might also observe here, if the Decree of universal Help (which is your Scheme) was not a needless Decree, notwithstanding God's certain Fore-sight, that it would not, nay, that it could not be universally accepted, (supposing none can prevent what will be :) Why might not this *Ante-lapsarian* Provision, contrived and concerted before the Fall, be of some Use; be of the same, or greater Use? Since, for any Thing the Divine Persons concerned in it, knew to the contrary, it might (as the Event shews) be of infinite Use and Advantage to a rebellious and ruined Race; who are hereby delivered from the otherwise inevitable and direful Effects of *Adam's* Fall, and are put into a new State of Trial again for Life and Immortality.

So that was a *Saviour* provided even from Eternity, and did the Texts I am next to consider, imply thus much; yet your Cause is gone, unless you could prove also, that this Provision was absolute, and not conditional; and did infer the Certainty as well as Possibility of *Adam's* Fall. For otherwise, when we are said, To be chosen in Christ before the Foundation of the World, Eph. 1. 4. and Christ is said

to be fore-ordained before the Foundation of the World, 1 Pet. 1. 20. the Meaning may be no more than this; As God determined before the Foundation of the World to make such a Creature as *might be happy*, if he *wou'd*, by obeying the Law of his Nature; or, as *might destroy himself by Disobedience*; so God purposed before all Worlds that the Happiness of this Creature, upon Supposition of its Disobedience, should be never more obtainable in a Way of Merit, but in a Way of Grace, i. e. of these two Ways he chose the latter, viz That we shall all be happy in Christ Jesus whether Greek or Jew, Circumcision or Uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond or Free; that Christ might be all in all, Col. 3. 4.

But then you'll object and say, This Purpose according to the Election of Grace was only *conditional*, and depended upon the Will of Adam, whether it should take effect, or no. To which Mr. F's Answer, in his *Greatness of the Divine Love vindicated*, is, as I take it, *just and full*, p. 87. "If Adam, says he, had obey'd the Law of his Creation, (as he certainly *might* have done) then there had been a Law given which cou'd have given Life; and therefore, (as the Apostle observes, Gal. 3. 21.) *verily, Righteousness wou'd have been by the Law*. But now, if Righteousness or Life had been by the Law or by Works, (as it *might* have been) it *wou'd* never have been by Grace. We must have a Care, he goes on, of setting one Decree at Variance with another, and of representing the Divine Perfections as divided against themselves. An Election of Grace that makes the Fall of Adam necessary, is such a Grace or Favour, that it *wou'd* have been a Grace or Favour to have wanted" [or been without it.] "It looks more like an Expedient to repair or mend the Defects of God's own Works, than to relieve our first Parents against the Folly and Wickedness of their Works."

But to return to those two Passages of Scripture from which you say, it is plain, "That a Saviour was appointed before the Fall, and indeed before all Worlds, or from Eternity," p. 17. And here I find you build your Argument upon the Force of the Phrase, *Before the Foundation of the World*: which you will have always to signify, *Before the Creation of the elementary World*.

World. For if the Phrase is sometimes used in Scripture of Things that were done in *ancient Times only*, tho' *since the Fall*, it is incumbent upon you to assign the Reasons, why it mayn't be understood so *there*.

Now I think I can shew that the Phrase, *Before the Foundation of the World*, not only may, but sometimes must have a lower Signification.

1st, That it may. *κόσμος*, translated [*World*] in the abovementioned Texts, may denote the *reasonable World*, as well as the *elementary World*. As the Subject Matter *there* relates unto Men only, so the Expression is frequently used for Mankind; particularly, *John 1. 10. He was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not*, *John 3. 16, 17. God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, &c. God sent not his Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be saved.* And, *Rom. 5. 12. By one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, &c.* still intending by the *World*, the *Posterity of Adam*. — As MANKIND may be intended by the *World* in these Places; so by the *Foundation of the World*, may be meant the *Generation*, as well as the *Creation*, of Mankind. Our grand Parents were the *Founders* of this great Family, but not till they were *Parents*, and did, in Consequence of that Blessing, [*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the Earth*] propagate their Species. What countenances this Exposition the more, is, that when the *Septuagint* would speak of the *Foundation of Things*, and not of *Persons*, it frequently, at least, makes use of another Word, viz. *θεμελίον*. As, *Psal. 18. 7. Then the Earth shook and trembled, the Foundations also of the Hills moved, καὶ θεμελίαι αὐτῶν δέσαν.* So, *v. 15, Then the Channels of Waters were seen, and the Foundations of the World were discovered, καὶ θεμελίαι αὐτῶν ἀνεκάλυψαν*, not αὐτῶν κατεβόλαι αὐτῶν ἀνεκάλυψαν. — So that, *Before the Foundation of the World*, may be no more than, *Before all Generations*; or, *before Adam had laid any Foundation for Mankind by Propagation*. And this entirely agrees with, and answers the Design of both Apostles.

What is it for the *Ephesians*, who were *Gentiles*, to be chosen in Christ? Why, says *Dr. Hammond*, "it is God's bestowing upon them the Favour of being *Christians*, of revealing his Gospel to them, making known the Mystery
" in

" in *Jesus Christ*, ch. 1. v. 9. A Favour much beyond " any vouchsafed to former Ages." (See his Annotations on the N. Testament, p. 838) — Now to take away all Occasion of Vain-glory upon this Account, the Apostle shews it was an *undeserved Favour*, in that they were chosen to this Privilege; When? Why, not *before the Creation* of Man, and so *before* it was *certain* a Saviour would be wanted; but, tho' *after the Fall*, yet *before the Generation* of Mankind, and so *before* a Saviour could possibly be *deserved*. As when *Rebecca* had conceived by *Isaac*, (*The Children not being yet born, neither having done either good or evil*, that the Purpose of God according to Election might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth) it was said unto her, *The Elder shall serve the Younger*. Here, by the way, if *before* they were born, and had done either good or evil, the *good* and the *evil* were notwithstanding *infallibly certain*; where is the Argument, that an Election *before* that Time, must needs be an Election of *Grace*, and not of *Works*? Thus, *Peter* to shew that *Christ* was the Gift of the Father's *free Love*, makes him to be designed for the *Jews* (to whom he wrote that Epistle); When? Why not *before the Creation*, and so *before* it was *certain* a Redeemer would be *necessary*, (the Scope of the Epistle does not require this Sense) but *before the Generation* of *Adam's Posterity*, and so *before* either *Gentile* or *Jew* had done the least good; that it might appear to be not of Works, but of him that loved them, and gave his Son for them.

2dly, As the Phrase, *before the Foundation of the World*, may have a lower Sense than this, *before the Creation of the World*, so sometimes it must. For As, *from the Foundation of the World*, cannot always, if it ever does import, *from the very Beginning of the Creation*; but (as has been shewn already) must sometimes refer to the Commencement of some other Period of Time, and signify, *from the Generation of Mankind*, or *in the earliest Generations of the World*: So in all such Cases this Phrase, *before the Foundation of the World*, can imply no more than *before such Generations*, or *before the Beginning of such a Period*. The Force of the Expression will carry it no higher. All which may be true, tho' what is said to be done, was after the Fall. This will appear

pear yet plainer, if we compare the Phrase with one of the like Import in *Titus* 1. 2. *In hope of eternal Life, which God that cannot lie, promised* *ὡς ἡγοῦνται αἰώνιον*, *before the World began.*

Now, if the *Promise* was since the *Creation*, nay, since the *Fall*, then, *before the World began*, cannot here signify *before the Creation*, nor *before the Fall*. But what *Promise* have we to ground our *Hope* of *eternal Life* upon, till after the *Fall*, tho' indeed we had, before the *Generation* of the *World* of *Mankind* began? Hence that learned Critick, *Mr. Leigh*, explains it thus, "Promised before the *World* began, or rather from the *Beginning of Ages*, * viz. in that famous *Promise* of the blessed *Seed*, *Gen. 3.*" "It seems somewhat harsh" (says *Mr. Ball* on the *Covenant*) to interpret the Word, *promised*, by *decreed to promise*: And therefore it is better to refer it to the *Promise* made from the *Beginning of the World*." So *Dr. Hammond*, "It here being spoken not of a *Decree*, but of a *Promise* of *God's*, and such as cannot be broken without *Lying*, (which must therefore signify such a *Promise*, which was made to some *Body*, and not only his secret, unrevealed Purpose.)" [and I beg Leave to add, that being made the Ground of the *Believer's Hope*, it must be a *Promise known* unto us, and not such as may be supposed to be made to our *Head* only, and contained in the *Covenant* of *Redemption*, that passed in *secret* between the *Father* and the *Son*.] "This being the *Case*, it cannot well be interpreted of *Eternity*, but of some *long Time* ago, says the *Doctor*, under the *Times* of the *Old Testament*, such as was made to *Abraham*, *Gen. 15.* And thus the Phrase is all one with *ἐν γένει ἀρχαίων*, from ancient *Generations*, *Acts 15. 21.* Speaking of *Moses* his *Time*." And *Dr. Whitby*, a *Commentator*, you are pleased to appeal to, falls in with the same *Gloss*. "Seeing no such *Promise*, says he, could be made to *Men*, no such *Grace* given to them before there were any *Men* in the *World*, those Words, *ὡς ἡγοῦνται αἰώνιον* cannot

* See Leigh on the New Testament, p. 338:

“ properly be rendered, *before the World began* ; but as
 “ Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Oecumenius render them,
 “ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχαίου, of old Time, or, from the Beginning.
 “ — This Promise therefore, the Doctor goes on, was
 “ contained in the Writings of the Prophets, and either
 “ must relate to the Promise made to Adam immediately
 “ after the Fall, That the Seed of the Woman should break
 “ the Serpent's Head, which was a Promise made from the
 “ Beginning, and ὡς ἡρῶν αἰώνιον, before any of the
 “ three Ages of the World were passed ; or to the Pro-
 “ mise made to Abraham, that in his Seed should all the Fa-
 “ milies of the Earth be blessed, which was a Promise made
 “ a long time ago, and before the first Age of the World
 “ expired. So Zecharias speaks of the Promise of the
 “ Messias, made διὰ τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος προφητῶν, by the holy
 “ Prophets, from the Beginning.” † Or, as our Translation
 reads it, by the Mouth of the holy Prophets, which have been
 since World began. And yet the holy Prophets principally
 referr'd to, did not live till after the third Age of the World
 began, viz. till after the giving of the Law by Moses.

By this Time the Reader may see, that your two fa-
 mous Passages, whether they be considered by themselves,
 or whether they be compared with Passages of a like Im-
 port, are not so plain, as you imagine, to prove, That a
 Saviour was appointed *before the Fall*, and indeed *before all*
Worlds, or from Eternity, as you express it. Tho' if they
 did prove it, yet till you can shew that the Remedy was
 not provisional only, i. e. not only conditional, but absolute,
 they wou'd not answer your Purpose, nor be sufficient to
 establish your beloved Notion of an eternal, infallible Pre-
 science of Contingents as future.

Say, that the Phrase which you so much insist upon, as
 a Proof of your Hypothesis, is made use of by our blessed
 Saviour himself, when he speaks of his Father's Love to
 him, John 17. 24. What then? Tho' it be true that the
 Father loved him from Eternity, yet it is not therefore true,
 because the Father loved him, ὡς κατεβόλης κόσμου, be-
 fore the Foundation of the World: Unless you cou'd demon-
 strate, that whatever is ὡς κατεβόλης κόσμου, before the

† See Dr. Whitby's Annotations on Titus, ch. 1. v. 2.

Foundation of the World, is not only before the World of Mankind was founded by *Generation*, but before all *Creation* too, and from *Eternity*. As when Christ says of himself, *Before Abraham was, I am*; tho' it be true that the Person here spoken of was *before all Worlds*, and from *Eternity*, yet it does not *therefore* follow, because he was *BEFORE Abraham*: Unless whatever existeth *before Abraham was*, must consequently exist *before all Worlds* too, or from *Eternity*. Before you can argue from the meer Force of the Phrase, it must be first shewn, that *to be before Abraham was*, and *to be before all Worlds*, or from *Eternity*, are *always* equipollent Phrases, and of the same Signification.

But to proceed to your Argument taken from Prophecies for *future Contingencies*, or, (if you had rather) for God's *eternal Fore-knowledge of contingent Events*. It is true, Mr. F. owns Prophecies to be a *Difficulty* in our Way. "But then, he adds, they are *Difficulties* only, while "we have to do with those that hold both *Fore-knowledge* "and *Decrees*," *Essay*, p. 125. And if the Reasons he assigns for it, had not been an *insuperable* Difficulty in Mr. N's Way, he wou'd, I presume, have at least *attempted* an Answer to them.

You begin with the Predictions in the Old Testament, relating to our Saviour's *Sufferings*, &c. And "that there "are such Predictions found there, Mr. F. will not, you "hope, deny," p. 20. And 'till he does deny it, you will not, I hope, insinuate, as if he did. And yet your next Words are these; "Indeed you seem to express yourself "a little doubtfully about this." Very unkind and unfair! What, because he supposes *some* Passages may be adapted to our Saviour, and only *allusive*; must he therefore be made to question, whether *any* Passages in the Old Testament are *more than adapted*, or are truly *prophetick*? The Reader is desired to turn to the Pages, and judge for himself, p. 136, — 140. so that the following *Innuendo*, tho' introduced with an Air of Charity, is a little invidious: "But you are willing to think that Mr. F. does not "wholly lay aside an Argument, which the Advocates for "our holy Religion have always made use of, and in "which the Cause of Christianity is so much concerned."

As if the Argument from Prophecies for the Truth of Christianity is of *no Force*, unless *every* Passage produced for this Purpose is of *equal Force* ! But you must excuse him, if his *Bigottry* be not so great, but that he can suppose an *Argument*, and much more a *single Passage* or two, may be *made Use* of, yea, may be *always* made use of by the Advocates for our holy Religion, and yet not be *therefore*, or *always* good. It is not an uncommon Thing for *weak* as well as *solid* Arguments to be *pressed* into the Service, and used in the Defence of a *good Cause*. And where this is the Case, to be *over-tenacious* in our adhering to them, is rather to *injure* than to *serve* the Cause we defend.

The Words of *David*, *Pf.* 41. 9. have been considered already in Mr. F's first Letter to you, (see the *Review*, p. 26, — 30.) And as to those Passages you quote out of *Zechariah*, *Isaiah*, and the *Psalms*, p. 21. and that are referable to the Indignities offered unto Christ *at* or *before* his Crucifixion ; the Question is not, whether they were not fulfilled in our Saviour ? But, whether they were ALL *primarily* intended of our Saviour ? Not, whether they are justly ADAPTED to him ? But, whether they were *absolutely* PREDICTED of him ? Or, whether (if they were *absolutely foretold*) it was in the Power of any Creature to have prevented the Accomplishment ? You think the Prophecy of those Events was *absolute* and *unconditional*, and yet that the Events themselves did *depend* upon the *contingent* Determination of the Creature's Will, whether they shou'd come to pass or no. Now Mr. F. well observes in his *Essay*, p. 138. " That if you can prove that the Events were *absolutely foretold*, he thinks he may undertake to prove they were not at the Time of such Prophecies *most contingent*," as you are pleased to phrase it : " Or, if you can prove they were even *then* of the Number of such Actions, as were *most contingent*, he may undertake to shew they were only *conditionally foretold*," " An effectual Answer, I must own, say you, to our Argument, if you can make out what you undertake ; but, if I am not (say you) very much mistaken, you will find this a greater Difficulty than you are aware of," *Ler.* p. 22. Be it so ; yet it is not a greater Difficulty than you yourself have conquered for him, in the very
two

two next Paragraphs. For there, as he has shewn, † you in the strongest Terms assert, that the Events which are *absolutely* foretold, are *necessary*, and impossible to be otherwise. But can an Event be *contingent*, and yet *necessary* ? Possible not to be, and yet *impossible* not to be ?

Here Mr. F. might justly retort your Words, and say, “ Did I not know Mr. N. so well, as to be fully convinced
“ of his Sincerity in Enquiring after Truth, I shou’d be
“ tempted to think, that the great Stir he makes about
“ an Event being *contingent*, and yet *future*; or, it’s being
“ *absolutely predicted*, and yet *contingent*; and many
“ other Things of the same Kind; was only designed to
“ raise a Dust for the Sake of blinding the Eyes of his
“ Readers;” or to shew rather that in the Heat of the
Dispute he had blinded *his own* Eyes. And ’till, Sir, I see you extricate yourself out of this Labyrinth, and what I take to be a palpable Contradiction, I shall think myself excused from considering any further, such Arguments as are drawn from Prophecies; in as much as *contingent* Events, and Events *absolutely predicted*, have (by your own Confession) no more Communion with one another, than *Light* with *Darkness*.

The Point you undertake to evince, is, that *there are* CONTINGENT Events which God foreknows WILL be: Your Argument is this: There are *contingent* Events which are *absolutely* foretold. And yet if they be *absolutely* foretold, you tell us, they *must* be, they *cannot but* be; (and so say all Mr. F.’s Antagonists, the Reverend Mr. Bliss, Mr. Millar, and the nameless Author, as well as Mr. Norman.) But how then are they *contingent*, or such Events as *need not* be, or *may never* be ? And therefore, if this be your best Defence of God’s Fore-knowledge of *contingent* Events from Prophecies, you will pardon me, shou’d I so far agree with you, as to think also, *It is high Time to have done with the Argument, as it is to be judged of according to* SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

† See Mr. F.’s Letter to Mr. Norman, p. 23, 24.

To the Reverend Mr. MILLAR.

S I R,

IN the Conclusion of Mr. Fancourt's LETTER to Mr. Norman, and in the Beginning of his APPENDIX to that Letter, he (you know) *summs up* the Controversy between them in *three Particulars*. Your Book, in Defence of future Contingencies, animadverts upon every one of them. I shall close this Debate with a distinct Examination of those your Animadversions; waving here the Consideration of the other Parts of that Book, not only because the chief of your Arguments, so far as they relate to the main Dispute, have been discuss already, in the foregoing Letters; but also because the Author of the Abstract prays Mr. Bavius, "*to conjure us to be short, and not to say one Word beside the Purpose.*" The first cardinal Point Mr. F. makes to be this;

"FIRST, *Whether any Events were eternally certain, without a Decree to make them so?*" This Mr. N. affirms, and he denies.

Yet "whether he affirms this, or not, you tell us, you cannot say," p. 97. But why can't you? You add, "having never read Mr. N.'s Letter, since the first time you saw it." What, and yet undertake here to reply to Mr. F.'s Answer to it! But say, you never read that Letter more than once; (which, by the Way, is but an odd sort of Compliment to the Author you defend) yet your affected Doubtfulness in this Point, is utterly inexcusable; since he cites both the Page and Passage, where Mr. N. wou'd be thought to hold the Affirmative. See his Letter to Mr. N. p. 30. The Words are these; "But where is the Necessity, Sir, of asserting an eternal Decree of Sin, though an eternal Fore-knowledge be contended for?" p. 8. Methinks, you might either have believed the Quotation just; or, at least, have turned to the Page, and seen for yourself. — But when Mr. F. says, "*As no Events were certain before the Decree, so no other Events became certain upon the Decree, but what were contained in the Decree,*" (i. e. but what

what were decreed.) "To the first of these, you tell
 "us you agree: The Second you can hardly make Sense
 "of," p. 98. Well, Sir, I'll undertake to do it for you, (if I
 have not done it already) when you have made *consistent*
 Sense of *your own Words* that immediately follow. "Some
 "Events, say you, God decreed to *cause, produce, make*
 "*necessary*; and *some* Events he decreed to *permit*." As
 if a Decree to *permit* an Event (even in the Calvinistical
 Sense of *Permission*) did not *make it necessary*. Whereas
 you yourself have already told us, They "generally grant,
 "that the Decree makes *all Events necessary*." (See your
 first Preface, p. 14) — I wou'd further observe, That
 since a Decree to *make necessary* is the same with you, as
 to *cause and produce*; the Calvinists, in granting that the
 Decree makes *all Events necessary*, do, in Effect, grant that
 the Decree *causes and produces* Sin, *all Sin*; for Sin,
 with them, is *One of those Events*. So that, while you
 wou'd be thought to *vindicate* the Doctrines of Calvi-
 nism, from the *Censures* of others, you here *justify* the
harshest Censure that was ever pass'd upon that Scheme, viz:
 That it makes the blessed and holy God the *Author of Sin,*
all Sin. — The second great Point in Difference Mr. F.
 puts down thus;

"SECONDLY, *Whether God fore-knew from Eternity*
 "*that all the Sins of the Creature wou'd certainly be, and*
 "*yet never decreed they shou'd be?*"

This also Mr. N. affirms, and he denies; and says, "If
 "God ever knew they wou'd be, it is because he ever decreed
 "they shou'd be: Or, if it was to the Honour of the Di-
 "vine Will not to decree that such Wickednesses shou'd be,
 "it cou'd be no Dishonour to the Divine Mind, not to
 "know from Eternity they wou'd be; but only that they
 "might or might not be." To this, say you, "we [Cal-
 "vinists] answer; If by a Decree that Sin shou'd be, Mr.
 "F. means, a Decree to *cause* the Creature to Sin; to
 "cause, produce, or make Sin necessary; a Decree that left
 "not the Agent as free as he wou'd have been, if there had
 "been no such Decree; we deny that God decreed that Sin
 "SHOU'D BE." How, deny a Decree to make Sin ne-
 cessary, and yet grant that the Decree makes *all Events ne-*
 cessary! But Sin, perhaps, is *no Event*; or, tho' the De-
 cree makes Sin necessary, yet it is *all accidental*, and with-
 out

out any *Design* of the *Decree* to make it so. But if what the *Decree* makes necessary, and the *Design* of the *Decree*, are of equal Extent; (as no modest Man, I presume, will dare to deny) then he whose *Decree* makes all Sin necessary, must (with you, at least,) *design* to make all Sin necessary, and consequently must *design* to cause and produce Sin, ALL SIN. For these, in your Nomenclature, are all equipollent and synonymous Phrases. And yet, Sir, I will not cry out in your own uncharitable Strains, "But enough of this odious, direct Blasphemy," *Second Preface*, p. 9. And again; "Now this is such prodigious, shocking Blasphemy, that no Man, one would think, who believes there is a God, and knows the Meaning of these Terms, can calmly affirm it," p. 5. — But to return; As you allow, that no Events were eternally certain without a Decree to make them so, p. 97; so, you must *à fortiori* allow us, that no Events were eternally necessary, without it. But then, will any besides yourself affirm, that the Decree which makes Sin necessary, "leaves the Agent as free, as he would have been, if there had been no such Decree?" i. e. as he would have been, if his Sin had not been necessary?

Well, Sir; we have heard what you deny; What is it that you affirm? We [Calvinists] "say, that God from Eternity decreed to permit the future Creature to Sin; and in this Decree, with the foreseen Choice of the Creature to Sin, he saw infallibly that SIN WOULD BE." Here I might demand, 1. Why could not God, in the Decree alone, see infallibly that Sin would be, since, upon your Principles, the Decree itself makes all Events necessary? Or, 2. If over and above the Decree, a foreseen Choice of the Creature to Sin, was requisite in order to see infallibly that Sin would be; then why was not a foreseen Choice of the Creature alone sufficient, without a Regard to the Decree, in order to see infallibly that Sin would be? Or, 3. If the Choice of the Creature to Sin was uncertain without the Decree, and therefore could not be certainly foreseen, but in the Decree; then is it not evident, that the Certainty of Sin's Existence arises from the Decree of the Creator, and not from any future Choice of the Creature? Or, 4. If the future Choice of the Creature be certain, and may be certainly foreseen, without the Decree; then how does the Decree MAKE such a Choice necessary, (as the

the Calvinists generally hold) since it is now supposed to be necessary, antecedent to (or at least independent upon) the Decree? However, this I take to be plain, according to your Scheme, that there is a Decree, and a Decree: 1st, A prior Decree to make a Creature that wou'd infallibly fall, shou'd God permit it; in which Decree he infallibly foresaw the hypothetical Certainty of its Fall, i. e. that the Creature wou'd certainly Sin, was it but permitted. Then, 2dly, There is an after Decree to permit this future Creature to Sin; which makes its Sin to be now absolutely Certain; and in this Decree, — God infallibly foresaw its absolute Certainty. But now, since our Sins were not absolutely certain, before God decreed to permit them, but became absolutely certain upon it; (for what you add about the foreseen Choice of the Creature to Sin, I take to be only a Mist artfully raised before the unwary Reader, to hide the glaring Absurdity or Nakedness of your Doctrine) what can be more evident, than that they borrow all their absolute Certainty from God's permissive Decree? And consequently, that it is this permissive Decree that makes all the Sins of the World certain; or, (as the Calvinists generally grant) makes all Events necessary?

I might observe further, That since the permissive Decree, in the Calvinistical Scheme, always ascertains the Event; God, according to them, did not so much as decree to permit the future Creature to stand, to be holy, and good. *Horresco Scribens!* For then the future Creature, upon their Principles had certainly stood, and wou'd have been holy and good, certainly so. There is, indeed, a permissive Decree that none do oppose, and that is very consistent with (nay, necessary to) the real Liberty of the moral Agent, viz. A Decree to permit, suffer, or leave the free Agent to make his own Choice, either to use or abuse his Freedom; having first set before him the Rule of Action, with the Sanctions proper to encourage Obedience. Such a Permission as this makes either Side possible, but neither Side certain, till the Creature itself hath done some Thing to determine its own Freedom. And without such a Permission, we shou'd be utterly incapable of any free Action at all, and “ seem no better than conscious Machines, capable neither
“ of Virtue nor Vice, Praise nor Blame, Rewards nor Punish-

"ments." But the Permission in your Scheme is "of a quite different, and truly enormous Kind." — The third, and, indeed, chief Point he makes to be, what follows ;

"THIRDLY, *Whether any Events can be both future, and contingent, at the same Time, i. e. such as will certainly be, and yet may never be?*"

This also Mr. N. (with the rest of his Brethren) affirms, but Mr. F. denies, and says, "While it is true they may never be, it cannot be true they certainly will be : Or, when it is once true they certainly will be, it is also true that they must be." Upon which last Point in Difference, he justly observes, do depend the other two : "Because if there be no Events contingent and yet certain, it can be no Dispute, Whether any contingent Events were eternally certain without a Decree ? Or, whether they cou'd be known to be so, but in the Decree ? Since upon this Supposition they will not be certain at all, and therefore cou'd not be known as such." (See his Letter to Mr. N. p. 43.) And here he is so happy, as to have You and Mr. Norman both intirely with him. For "in Reallity, say you, Things are supposed certain, before they are known or fore-known," (First Preface, p. 14.) "And it is very obvious, says Mr. N., that God sees Things no otherwise than in Truth they are," Let. to Mr. F. p. 30. And so say all the other Gentlemen, that have wrote against Mr. F.

Nay, you yourself allow this last to be the main Question; viz. *Whether such Actions ought to be reputed free, which were ever certain ? p. 112. or, (which is the same) ought to be reputed contingent, which were ever future ?* You might have added also; the only Question, since all the other are dependent upon it, and may be settled in a Trice, when this is adjusted. But let us hear the Remarks you have to make, upon what Mr. F. offers in Defence of the Negative of what you call the main Question. "It, in other Words, say you, amounts to this, that Certainty of Event is the same, with Necessity of Event," p. 98. You are very Right. The Example he brings by Way of Illustration explains it thus. Having put the Question, with Respect to Adam's Fall, "*Whether he cou'd be both ever true, that he wou'd fall; and yet really true, that*"
"he

“ he might have prevented his Fall ? My Opinion, says he,
 “ is, There is a Necessity either to deny the real Possibility
 “ of his Standing, or to deny the eternal Certainty of his
 “ Falling.” (See his Letter to Mr. N. p. 43.) But to say,
 “ that Freedom and Necessity are the same, you tell us, is
 “ manifestly absurd,” p. 99. And yet the Absurdity is
 manifestly true upon your Hypothesis ; unless a Man can be
 said to be free to do either, when one Side is impossible, as
 impossible as to turn, what will be, into, what will not be.
 But you go on ; “ Yea, since every Event MUST be FU-
 “ TURE before it is PRESENT, it will follow, that
 “ there never has been, never will be, never can be, a free
 “ or contingent Event, in the World ; because as soon as
 “ it became, or becomes future, then, says Mr. F., it is
 “ no longer contingent, it MUST be.” But consider, Sir,
 If every Event (and therefore every free Action) MUST be
 FUTURE, before it is PRESENT ; then is it not necessa-
 ry that every free Action, before it doth exist, shou’d one
 time or other exist ? And what is this, but to affirm your-
 self, that Freedom and Necessity are the same ? But now,
 with Respect to free Actions, we say, all that is necessary,
 is, that they be POSSIBLE before they be PRESENT ;
 their actual Existence implies no more, *Ab esse ad posse valet*
Consequentia. And then, Our free Actions might have
 been ever possible to have been, BEFORE they were present,
 and yet ever possible not to have been ; and consequently,
 might have been once free and contingent, even tho’ what
 is future, MUST be. So that it will not follow, that ei-
 ther an Action may be contingent and future, at the same
 Time ; or else that all our Actions were ever Necessary.
 What is future you allow to be certain : But now, our Ac-
 tions are said to be free, not because they ARE contingent,
 WHILST they are certain ; but because they WERE con-
 tingent, BEFORE they were certain. You are aware of
 the Distinction, and therefore tell your Friend, “ If Mr. F.
 “ says, that they were contingent, before they were future
 “ [or certain ;] you answer, The very Contingency itself
 “ was FUTURE, [or certain] before it was PRESENT.”
 But, Sir, this Sophistry is too thin to impose upon an intel-
 ligent Reader. Say, that any particular Action will be
 contingent To-morrow, viz. on Friday ; or, that the Agent

then will have a Power to do it, or let it alone. What then? Tho' it is now true, that it WILL BE contingent TO-MORROW; yet it is as true, that it IS contingent TO DAY; i. e. in Case to Day also the Agent has a Power to do it, or let it alone. The Mystery lies here; whilst the Contingency of an Event endures, it may be said to co exist with the several Parts of such Duration: And so, with respect to those Parts of this Duration which are to come, the Contingency may, in some Sort, be said to be future; as with respect unto such Parts which are past, it may be said to be past; and may be said to be present, with respect to that Part of Duration which is present.

Or thus; upon God's Purpose to create a free Agent (for 'till then, the very Contingency itself is not future, as you wou'd have it, but only possible; a Liberty that may be in a Creature, not a Liberty that certainly will be) I say, upon God's Purpose to create such an Agent, its Power to act, or not act, becomes future, before it is present; that is, in these Circumstances, it is true, it will have such a Power, before it is true, that it actually has it. But then, that it will have such a Power, is no longer a Contingency, what may or may never be; it is now as certain, as necessary as what God hath purposed to be: All that yet remains contingent, is, How it will exercise this Power. That it will have a Power to act, or not, (I say) is now certain, is now necessary, by Virtue of a Divine Decree; but whether of the two it will do; act or not act, is yet uncertain, is yet contingent: That this future Creature will have a Power to do this, or that, indeed, is now future, is now certain, and what must be; but that it will do this, and not that; or that, and not this, is as yet only possible, and therefore contingent; because it is yet true, that it may do either: Whereas, was it now true, it wou'd do this, it wou'd be impossible to do that; or, was it now true, it wou'd do that, it wou'd be impossible to do this; as impossible as it is to do both, to act and not act, at the same Time. Therefore as to what you add. "Yea, the very first Action of the first Man, was future, before it was present; and the "Like may be said of every Action," when clearly explained, it amounts to no more than this; after a Decree to make the first Man, and to make him a free Agent, his
POWER

POWER of acting from that Moment was infallibly certain, and so was future, before it was present; and not that any individual, determinate ACTS of his free Power were so: And the same may be said of the Powers of every other future free Agent; which tho' very true, is nothing to your Purpose.

In the next Page you are upon the same Topic again. "Adam's Fall was, in Mr. F.'s Opinion, a contingent Action; and so it was in Ours, say you." Well then, so far, however, you are agreed. But you add, "It was FUTURE, before it was PRESENT. This is self-evident. It was therefore a future Contingency, or the Action was not contingent; which yet he grants it was," p. 100. True; he grants that it was contingent, but then he contends also, that Adam's Fall was only possible, and not future, till he himself had done some Thing to make it future; which to us is self-evident also. You proceed, "If he says, it ceased to be contingent, as soon as it became future;" (which, indeed, he does say, and is ready to venture the whole Controversy upon it) "you answer, 1. Then the Action, when it was done, was not contingent." Certainly so; it was no longer contingent; or an Action that might or might not be, unless an Action may be done, and not done, or past, and not past; at the same Time. 2. "Supposing, say you, that it became future, but some Minutes or Hours before," when "from his then present Thoughts, God certainly saw his future Thoughts; yet these present Thoughts, you go on, were either contingent, or not. He must say, they were contingent, i. e. free, and so do we." Then, I find, you are both agreed here also. But what wou'd you infer from this Concession? — "Well then, say you, even these [present Thoughts] were FUTURE, before they were PRESENT; and so on, till he will be forced to own, either, that there never were any Contingencies, or, that they were all once future Contingencies." Whereas all that necessarily follows, is, That such free Thought were POSSIBLE, before they were PRESENT; and so on, 'till his Opponents will at length be forced to own, either, that there were, indeed, never any Contingencies, or, that their Contingencies were never other than necessary Contingencies, i. e.

Con-

Contingencies and no Contingencies. 3. "Why may not an Event, you tell us, be both future and contingent, in different Respects?" And we say so too; Contingent with respect to what it once was, Future with respect to what it now is. But then remember, Sir, that it ceases to be contingent, when once it becomes future; or else they wou'd be future and contingent, in the same Respect too. You add, "Why might it not be true, and known to be true, that Adam wou'd sin freely?" If you mean, that he wou'd sin freely, if he sinned at all; it was, doubtless, both true in itself, and known to be so. But this will not content you. It must be both true, that he will Sin, and true that he may never Sin, to answer your Purpose. So your following Words explain it; "If it was" [*viz.* true that he wou'd Sin freely] "here was, say you, a future Contingency. It was Future, in as much as it was true, that he wou'd Sin; Contingent, in as far as it was true, that he wou'd freely chuse to do it, when he wou'd know, he might freely let it alone." Here, not to enquire, whether you have laid in for a Retreat, by changing [*in as much as*] in the former Part of the Sentence, into [*in as far as*] in the latter; I answer, when once it is true, and known to be true, that any Man will certainly Sin, it ceases to be true, (and they who know it to be certain, might know, if they wou'd, that it ceases to be true.) that it is in his Power now to refrain from Sin. It is no more in his Power to forbear now, than it is to make what will be, that it will not be. Try, Sir, and your Weakness will soon convince you, there is more than a seeming Contradiction between these two Propositions; Mr. MILLAR will certainly try to answer me; Mr. MILLAR may never try. If it be now true, that you will certainly try, tho' you think you can forbear, and may pretend that you know you can; yet, sure I am, that you, in these Circumstances, neither will, nor can forbear. Do but actually forbear what you certainly will not forbear, but which yet you pretend you can forbear, and the Controversy, I own, is at an End: The Garland is your own, and you are worthy to wear it. — But, let me beg you, Sir, to give this Matter a second Thought. Mr. MILLAR will certainly try to answer, is supposed to be a true Proposition. What then must your

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Power to forbear imply? Why nothing less than this, *A Power to make a true Proposition, false.* But you yourself have decided this Matter. "Every Proposition being *" either true, or false, is, say you, immutably true or false,"* p. 50. i. e. *it can't but be, what it is.* So that for you to say, that Mr. F. *may, and knows* he may forbear, what he certainly will do, is, in Effect, to say, that he *may, and knows* that he may "make (as you there phrase it) an *im-*
" mutable Truth false, and an immutable Falshood true ; i. e.
" do Impossibilities, work Contradictions, do that which cannot
" possibly be done, which (as you observe) is more than
" Mr. F. himself can do," (and give me Leave to add) or Mr. Millar either. "And let *this*" (might I return your Compliment) "be a Confutation of your Jargon" concerning future Contingencies. — Wou'd any see the Fallacy and Folly of such Sort of Arguing further exposed, Mr. F., I think, has done it effectually in the Appendix to his Letter to Mr. Norman, p. 3, — 10.

One Word more with respect to the Title of that Letter, and I have done: "He pretends, you say, that his *learn-*
" ed Opponents had quite mistaken the true State of the
" Question, and proposes it in these Words. " Whether
" there can be any such Things as FUTURE or CER-
" TAIN CONTINGENCIES?" Though he had judi-
" ciously entitled his Letter, future Contingencies, no Con-
" tingencies." (See your Second Preface, p. 13.) — And
 yet, Sir, if his *learned Opponents* have not mistook it; wou'd they not do well to display a little more of their Learning, in shewing that his Complaint is Pretence only? However, what is there, (I pray) in the Title of his Letter to contra-
 dict it? This, if a right one, makes his State of the Que-
 stion, not the less, but the more, a true State of it; not-
 withstanding any Thing in your Adversative Particle [*tho'*]
 (so judiciously inserted here) to the contrary. Mr. Norman, in
 his Appendix, has something to say also upon the same Head:
 "The Title of Mr. F.'s Letter," [*viz. what will be, must*
" be,] says he, "is I think, a very odd one." But is it
 not a very true one? It is not only true in itself, even un-
 to a Proverb; but it contains also a true State of the chief
 Point in Difference. "Some things, Mr. N. says, are
" certain, and yet, at the same Time, contingent," Ap-
 pendix,

pendix, p. 12. *i. e.* They will be, and yet may never be : This Mr. F. denies, and says, That what is certain, is not contingent ; or, in other Words, what will be, must be. Whereas the Title of his own Letter, if it be not a very odd one ; it is, I'm sure, a very wrong one, considered as an Answer to Mr. F.'s Essay. He titles it, [God's Fore-knowledge of contingent Events vindicated :] insinuating hereby, that the Dispute is about God's Fore-knowledge. But, as Mr. F. ever allow'd, that there are some Events contingent, and others, future ; so, it was never a Doubt with him, Whether God knows them to be, what they really are ; viz. the one, CONTINGENT ; the other, FUTURE. What he denies, is, That any Event is contingent, and future, at the same Time ; or KNOWN unto God as such.

This Proposition, [God fore-knows contingent Events] is a complex one, and consists of two Parts ; of an incidental and principal Proposition. The incidental, or that which is imply'd, is, That there are FUTURE CONTINGENCIES, *i. e.* Events that will be, and yet may never be ; (for this is what Mr. N. means by contingent Events.) The principal, or that which is expressed, is, That God FORE-KNOWS them. Now Mr. F. contends, that the real Dispute is only about the incidental Proposition, Whether there be any FUTURE CONTINGENCIES ? And not about the principal one, viz. Whether God FORE-KNOWS them, in Case there be ? So that to me it is plain to a Demonstration, that the Controversy between them, is, Whether there be any future or certain Contingencies to be fore-seen ? And not, Whether God foresees them, tho' there be ? And therefore that the Title of Mr. F.'s Letter is not more true, then pertinent. The Reader may see this Point more largely discuss'd in his Letter to Mr. N. p. 15, — 22. and in his Apology, p. 8, 9, 18, — 26. Nay, every one is bound in strict Justice to the Author to consult and weigh those Passages, before he admits such an unrighteous Imputation, as if Mr. F. deny'd God's Fore-knowledge of what will be. — But the Oddness of the Title Mr. N. says, he passes over ; after having first diverted himself with a pretty Quibble or Pun upon the Ambiguity of the Term, Will. “ And since “ Mr. F. will affect such a Way of Writing, it seems he “ must

“ must do it, and let him take his Fate,” *Append.* p. 3.—
Forgetting, that many a Man *wills* to be, what he never
will be : And therefore, if Mr. N. *will* affect such a Way
of *Witticism* ; as, I fear, he never *will* be *witty*, so let
him sit down a mere *Punster* for me, and take his Fate
too.

I am, Sir,

Your real Friend, and humble Servant, &c.

POSTSCRIPT to the LETTER to
the Reverend Mr. NORMAN.

THERE is, Sir, a Paragraph in your *Appendix*,
which it mayn't be improper to consider here.
Mr. F. had took Notice, That if Mr. *Clarkson's*
Observation holds true, your Notion of an *eternal Fore-*
knowledge without an eternal Decree, “ was an Invention
“ of the *Jesuits* about an Age before to make good the
“ *Doctrine of Free-will*” —. To which you answer ;
“ Mr. *Fancourt*, you suppose, thought he should slur your
“ Notion of God's fore-knowing Sin without decreeing it,
“ by his Citation from Mr. *Clarkson*,” p. 14: But why
so ? Since, if the Notion be true, let the *Discovery* be of an
earlier or later Date, the Truth is the same, venerable and
unchangeable. “ But, say you, supposing Mr. F. to have
“ done Justice to that Author, (which you cannot be sure
“ of, having not the Book by you) what he says does no
“ ways affect you, because you are satisfied that Mr.
“ *Clarkson*, tho' a learned and worthy Man, was mista-
“ ken.” But why should you make a *Difficulty* of be-
lieving the Quotation to be just ? Since Mr. F. not only
mentions the Words, but directs you to the very Book and
Page where they stand, viz. in Mr. Cl.'s *Discourse of Free-*
Grace, p. 114: especially when you expect the Reader
should credit your own Citation, without any better Evi-
dence : As when you add, “ The Ancients, Dr. *Whitby*
“ tells us, unanimously held, that there was no Necessity
“ laid upon the Will of Man, either by Prophecies, Presci-
“ ence, or the Decrees of God. And he mentions *Origen*,
“ *Clemens of Alexandria*, *Irenaeus*, *Justin Martyr*, and
“ *Chrysostom*, as agreeing in this.” * To which I might

* Dr. *Whitby's* Annotations on Luke 22. 22.

reply, The Dispute is, what Reason and Scripture, not what the Ancients say. Besides, supposing neither Prophecies, Prescience, nor the Decrees of God lay any Necessity upon the Will, yet if they imply a Necessity in the Will; is not that as bad for Man, and equally inconsistent with Liberty? Man has a Power to act otherwise than it is foretold, fore-known, and decreed he shall act; or he has not. If he has not; what becomes of his Liberty of Indifference, in such Respects, to act thus or thus? Which yet you, as well as Mr. F., contend for. But if he has; then is it not in Man's Power, at least, to make a true Prediction, false; to fix an Error upon infallible Fore-knowledge, and to make void an immutable Decree? I might observe further; If "the Ancients unanimously held, that there was no Necessity laid upon the Will of Man, either by Prophecies, Prescience, or the Decrees of God;" must they not hold too, there was no Necessity to quit Decrees for Prescience alone, in order to rescue the Freedom of the Will from the Laws of Necessity? Nay, (to be consistent with themselves) must it not be their unanimous Opinion also, that every Gloss upon Prophecies, Prescience, and Decrees, which supposes a Necessity upon the Will to determine only one Way, must be certainly wrong? For a Necessity of Action they, with one Voice, inveigh against, as subversive of all Religion, and utterly incompatible with God's Government of moral Agents. They who assert this, (saith Origen, in the Place you yourself refer to) absolve Sinners from all Guilt, and lay the Charge of all the Evils which they do upon God, as by his Decree, Prescience, or Prediction, laying upon them that Necessity, which will not suffer them to do otherwise. They also, saith he, take away *τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν*, the Freedom of our Will, and with that all Praise and Dispraise, or all Difference between Things worthy of Praise or Reprehension: This Doctrine also cuts off all that is said of the Equity of the Divine Judgment, and of the Threats made against, or the Punishments inflicted on the Wicked, and of the Promises of a better Life, and the Reward of them that do well. — God, saith Irenaeus, hath always preserved to Man his Freedom and Power over his own Actions, ut iuste damnentur qui non obediunt ei, that they may justly be condemned who do not obey him: For Man, saith Justin Martyr, would neither be worthy of Praise or Reward, *ἐὰν ἂν ἦτορ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ ἀπορίας*, did

did he not of himself chuse what is good, but was so by Nature ; nor being evil, could be justly punished, if he were not so of himself, ἀλλ' ἐδὴ δυνάμει ἡμῶν ἵνα ἵπταται, but could be no other than what he was made ; for we are crowned or punished, διὰ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, for that which is in our Power to do. And what the Doctor cites there out of Clemens of Alexandria, and Chrysostom, amounts much to the same Purpose.

But whether a Fore-knowledge without a Decree, was a Doctrine that any of them maintained, does not there appear, but rather the contrary ; because Liberty, according to them, was as consistent with Decrees as Prescience. You indeed, tell us, that “ the Notion which you plead for “ was, you are fully satisfied, advanced long before there “ was a Jesuit in the World.” But since we have the Authority of Mr. Clarkson, whom you own to be a learned and a worthy Man, against you ; it had been but just, if, for the full Satisfaction of others, you had produced your Reasons also. However, say that your Notion is (as some contend) expressly and at large defended by Origen and Eusebius ; yet it no ways affects the real Controversy ; because (I say) it is not the variable and fallible Opinion of the Ancients, but the unerring Dictates of REASON, or the infallible Testimony of SCRIPTURE, which we appeal to as the STANDARD to decide this important Point. Besides, it is not enough for the Ancients to say, (as Chrysostom does) that neither is Prescience the Cause of Wickedness, nor does it induce [or imply, for that is, or ought to be, his Meaning] a Necessity of doing it ; unless they had proved it too. You have affirmed as much concerning absolute Prophecies ; but then you do but affirm it, nay, you contradict it, almost as soon as you affirm it. The Treachery of Judas, and the Crucifixion of Christ by the Jews, were, with you, Events that were absolutely foretold ; and yet “ Judas, you say, was under no Necessity of betraying Christ, nor were the Jews compell'd “ to crucify him ; they acted freely in bringing about these “ Events, and the Events themselves must belong to the “ Class of Contingencies.” But then you contend also, “ it was necessary they should exactly correspond with their “ Predictions ;” and, “ if it had been possible for Things “ thus predicted not to have proved true, you cannot see “ that the Prophecies themselves would have been of any “ Signification.” But this, as Mr. F. has justly observed,

is, in effect, "to affirm that *Judas* and the *Jews* were "and were not under a *Necessity* of offending; and so to insinuate, that this was all their *Crime*, they would not forbear to do, what it was really impossible they should not do." Vid. his *Letter* to you, p. 23, 24. So that a better *Solution* of this *Difficulty* is certainly necessary, whether Mr. F. has hit upon it, or no, in his *Essay*. *Let.* 5. *Sect.* 3. p. 126, — 140.

Now, Sir, I shall (for the Present) take my Leave of You and the Rest of the Gentlemen concerned in this Controversy; which I chuse to do, in the Words of the Reverend Mr. Blifs to Mr. Fancourt. "I cannot help saying, that as I have not only attack'd you in your strongest Holds, and encounter'd every Difficulty that lay in my Way, but have thrown the Controversy into such a Method as you may easily follow me in; I have all the Reason in the World to expect something like a just Reply, if you vouchsafe to reply to me at all. And, for your Encouragements thereto, I have this farther to add, that if you, Gentlemen, will consider my Arguments like fair Disputants, and sincere Enquirers after Truth, defending by sound Reasoning those Positions in your *Vindications*, which you think you can defend against me, and retracting such as you find indefensible; you shall in Return, if it pleases God to spare my Life, meet with the same Candour and Ingenuity from me, p. 81.

I am, Sir, Yours, &c.

N. B. Shou'd any undertake to defend the eternal Certainty of our free Actions, against the Arguments abovementioned for the contrary, the Author thinks it reasonable to insist upon it, That they do not first beg the Certainty of our Actions, and then prove their Freedom; or first beg their Freedom, and then prove their Certainty; that they don't argue the Certainty of our Actions from one Topic, and their Freedom from another: But he expects, that they shou'd apply themselves to both Parts; to demonstrate both the Freedom and the Certainty of the same Action, and that from the same Topic, whether it be from Reason or Revelation; particularly, that they shew, that the same sacred Writings, which assure us that such an Action is ABSOLUTELY FORETOLD, declare also that it was even then CONTINGENT, and what MAN might have prevented.

F I N I S.

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